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Professional development in the field of education

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Professional Development in the Field of Education

Jeanne L. Hager Moore

Dissertation submitted to the
College of Human Resources and Education
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Professional Development in the Field of Education

Jeanne L. Hager Moore

The process of continual growth and development in the teaching profession represents a common value among education professionals. Federal and state laws maintain that teachers must continue to study. These mandates, pronounced at federal, state, and local levels to create high academic standards for students, must be met through quality instruction. Both the profession and the public expect that teachers have the willingness and the ability to engage in continuous learning that will impact instruction. The process by which educators keep their knowledge base current typically is referred to as professional development. Professional development is an ongoing process of continuous improvement, not an isolated event or series of events. The culture of the school must support continuous inquiry and reflection on the protecting and nurturing of research-based approaches to ensure that all students will achieve. If the goal of high academic standards and achievement for all students is to be realized, effective continuous professional development must be maintained as a systemic process.

Although professional development influences the organizational context in which it takes place, it also impacts the individual learner. Effective models of professional development must consider current knowledge of adult learning. Adults need to know that their efforts will result in the opportunity to achieve competency and that the process will respect their intellectual potential and capacity. Educators must have the opportunity to self-regulate their learning opportunities enabling participants to engage in mindful, intentional, and thoughtful behaviors.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate facilitators and barriers to educators' participation in professional development and to assist in developing quality learning opportunities for educators. This report (1) summarizes the perspectives that teachers place on professional development; (2) discusses the possible facilitators and barriers, based on teachers' perceptions, to educators acquiring the skills and engaging in the activities that characterize quality professional development, and (3) identifies a general approach to addressing the delivery of quality professional development.

According to the survey analysis used for this study, the data clearly reports that high percentages of teachers view themselves as continuous learners. Collaboration and collegiality are themes that the pilot study identified as strong, quality characteristics of professional development. Teachers' responses to the survey indicate that learning in groups is a facilitator to learning, along with attending conferences, strong information seeking skills, enjoyment and change of pace, easy access to learning opportunities, encouragement from family members and other teachers, and application to classroom and student achievement. The most highly named barriers are time, financial obligations, family responsibilities, and professional choice in programming.

The study offers recommendations for learners and providers of professional development opportunities. Educators have a responsibility to encourage and nurture their own love of learning, and educational organizations have the responsibility to create conditions and provide tools and procedures for helping teachers experience learning situations. There is also a call for additional research on the topic of participation in professional development.

DEDICATION

For my parents, James Albert and Louise Hager
for their ongoing love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Tables

List of Figures

Figures

Chapter One
Becoming a Lifelong Learner

<center>**Introduction**</center>

The purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of education through developing professionalism and capabilities of teachers. The study will review the range of factors that are characterized as quality attributes of professional development. Further, the research will attempt to interpret the perceptions of teachers and render explicit their processes to understanding through reflexive interpretation of their experiences with learning opportunities.

As I reflect on my own journey toward becoming a lifelong learner, I will use an autobiographical format throughout this dissertation. I will use italic text to reveal the autobiographical comments. I will use regular font when referencing the literature and to discuss the study design. My intention is to make the readability simpler for the reader to comprehend. Nel Noddings (1986) viewed autobiographical research as one in which all participants regard themselves as part of a community. She wrote: "we approach our goal by living with those whom we teach in a caring community, through modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation" (p. 502). Elbaz (1990) argues that narrative, autobiographical texts provide the best means for teachers to reflect upon their experiences. Some experiences focus upon critical incidents, or 'key events in an individual's life, and around which pivotal decisions revolve' (Tripp, 1993). These critical incidents provoke the person to select particular kinds of actions, which lead in particular directions (Sikes et al., 1985, p. 57).

By conducting research in my own field of practice, I aim to improve the performance of teachers with the intention of assisting educators by identifying quality characteristics of professional development that help lead to learning within the field of education. By using an autobiographical text, I hope to extend my grasp of becoming a lifelong learner to those in the field of education for whom it forms part of their daily lives. This narrative attempts to bring teachers' voices to the center of the debate on developing through professional experiences. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1996) note that what is missing from the knowledge base for teaching are the voices of teachers themselves. I will attempt to interpret the perceptions of teachers and

<center>1</center>

render explicit their processes to understanding through reflexive interpretation of their experiences with learning opportunities.

In this narrative, I seek to understand the contribution that academic studies make to my own understanding of my life, and how understanding my life contributes to my academic studies. A structure of meaning, which results from past experiences, can also present images of possible futures, like playing school with my sisters in my early childhood. The coherence is the journey of what has been, what is now, and what will come.

Let me first introduce myself. When I was young, I wanted to try all the typical vocations that little girls dreamed about, for example nurse, secretary, store clerk, and teacher. My sisters and I often played make-believe games, like house, store, and school, allowing our imaginations to lead us through the roles of our possible futures. Joining the multitudes of other young graduates, I left high school with doubts and uncertainties about my future career.

Having little guidance, I often use the terms "young and dumb" to describe myself as I made educational and career choices. However, I have truly experienced a satisfying career, as opposed to 'working at a job' like some unfortunate individuals. My life-long journey has taken me through the positions of teacher of learning support, elementary, and gifted support, elementary principal, and professor of literacy studies and education. Throughout my years in education, I have continued to learn and to grow professionally, and after considerable reflection, I believe I have insight on some of the challenges and some of the supports, which have influenced me to become a lifelong learner.

Beyond the walls of the universities, I have spent hours and hours of training in professional development. I am referring to the conferences, the workshops, the in-services, and the professional readings. I learned to depend on knowledge to assist me in nearly every new endeavor. For example, before I purchased my first home, I took a three-credit class in real estate. If I could not gain information from a class or some other form of professional development, I eagerly searched the Internet for scholarly sources or sought out experts for scholarly advice.

There were also challenges that could not be conquered with knowledge, like my fear of speaking in front of adults. I dominated those hurdles through experience and repetition. I also faced personal difficulties: divorce, single-motherhood, and financial burdens. Perseverance, diligence, and support of family and friends were often my saviors. Furthermore, as I entered a leadership role in education, I encountered the challenges of being a female in an authoritative position that was often held by a male.

Rudman and Kilianski (2000) report that gender authority within the workplace signify different status expectations for men and women. If males are more readily identified with authority than females, then females in these roles of leadership may be treated with negative attitudes. For example, Eagly and Karau (2002) established that when women display leadership behavior, like assertiveness, they deviate from expected gender-appropriate behaviors that are socially accepted, such as qualities of being nurturing.

I am reminded of the negative comments regarding the Presidential Election in November 2008, when Sarah Palin faced critics for her role as a Vice Presidential candidate. She was often condemned for taking such an active role in government when, some voters declared, that her expected role was to raise her family. I can attest that a strong woman learns to multitask. When in undergraduate school, I held two full-time jobs, one part-time job, and attended classes full-time. It was difficult, but it all fit together. Several years later, as a single-mother, I held a full-time job and attended classes for my principal certification. I also remodeled the apartment that we were living in after the children went to bed at night. The landlord reduced my rent in exchange for the work I did. Obviously, I have always been a hard worker. However, as I reflect on my past, I remember that I counted on education as my passageway to success. The hard work, the elbow grease, did no damage, but leadership and scholarship came as a result of my studies.

As I reflect on my own attributes, my memories reveal that I insisted on certain roles in my career. I was dating my husband by the time I was offered a principal's position, and I remember that he discouraged me from accepting the post. I started the new position the next school year.

Years later, when my children were away from home more than they were with me, I talked about returning to college for my Doctorate of Education. Again, my husband depressed my aspirations. This dissertation is evidence of my decision. My determination has changed my self-concept and allowed me to further my education and my career (and my husband never complained).

As I examine my academic journey, I can see that this led to that. I can see the cohesion in the people whom I have met, the choices that I have made, and the projects that I have worked on. I see myself as a reflection of others whom I have looked up to. For example, I have always had a strong work ethic, probably due to the fact that both my parents were raised during the years of the Great Depression, and therefore they worked diligently.

Particular people have influenced who I am. I have to admit, I have always had an admiration for leaders, those in charge. I have been in awe of those who possess a great deal of knowledge, for example an exceptional teacher who never appears to ever refer to a manual, or one whose strong sense of spirituality makes one wonder what he really knows or how he became so confident with that wisdom. I look to leaders in the field of education as role models, linking my identity to some; even hearing myself occasionally say, "I can be you someday." I never wanted to be the person that puts the stickers on bananas.

And finally, my experiences have defined me. My work with special education and with elementary, and my experience as a mother have made me a child advocate. My position as a principal has forced me to look at professional development. Learning, for me, has taken place through reorganization occasioned through experience, acquaintances, and social development. I have moved from familiar cultures to newly envisioned ones many times throughout my life. New learning, new knowledge, has been the catalyst to move me from one culture to another, for example from teacher's aide to teacher, from teacher to principal, from principal to professor, and so forth. In cooperation of the learning community, I have attempted to make my journey unique.

This research includes information learned from a pilot study that I conducted in 2008, which helped to identify parallels between the participating teachers and myself, as active learners. Contributing teachers validated their own achievements by the accomplishments of the students. A noticeable change in consciousness was evidenced by teacher commitment and teacher growth. The participating teachers continue to demonstrate that they value new knowledge. The group has quickly become leaders within the faculty group and is anxious to continue to learn.

As I looked back at my education and my career, I realized that I have become a Lifelong Learner. I recognize I have finally come to what I was seeking out. Finding it, I appreciate it. However, what I failed to realize was that I was different. "Of course all teachers are like me. Of course they all want to learn all that they can," has been my argument. I did not comprehend and did not want to believe that many educators are reluctant learners or are complacent with what has already been achieved. What are the implications for schools if this is the case? How can mission statements that support lifelong learning be trusted? How can teachers promote lifelong learning to students when they have become comfortable with their own knowledge base?

As I contemplate these questions, I reevaluate myself. What critical incidents have led me to become one who yearns for more information in my career field? How did it happen? And, more importantly and pertinent to my role as educator, how do I influence others to become active learners in the field of education?

Problem Statement

Do teachers consider professional development opportunities to be effective? Effective professional development programs must address the organizational, cultural, and systemic supports needed (the context); the way content-specific knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes are acquired (the process); and the content-specific knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes needed (the content) (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2000). Learning the content of a subject must be accompanied by the process of learning, i.e. learning

how to learn, and by a realization that this process must be extended throughout an educator's career.

Teachers must continually improve in professional practice, and most states require a certain number of hours of professional development over a period of a distinct number of years. However, much of the learning that educators engage in is based upon traditionally presented staff development opportunities, usually selected by administrators. Much more unique are the self-initiated types of learning that might be characterized as self-regulated learning and may focus on the educator's own needs and the needs of the students. The challenge is in the creation of an atmosphere that encourages such independence. The profession of teaching must reconsider the enduring principle of continuous learning and decide how to establish the belief as an operational principle.

With the Federal and State Departments of Education requiring professional development, schools must ensure that the opportunities are valuable to teachers. In 2008, I conducted a pilot study as a qualitative research analysis to identify professional development characteristics that most strongly influence teachers to change instruction within their classrooms. I relied on the work of several theorists who look at stages of development, such as Ken Wilber's *Theory of Everything* (2001), and Don Beck's *Spiral Dynamics* (2006). Beck's work is based on a spiral, in which colors are used to describe stages (or memes) of values. The study clearly identified categories of quality characteristics of professional development as those within the Green Meme, which were Collegiality, Collective Participation, Common Purpose, Support, and Collaboration. These categories seem to be related to the culture of a school and include the social component reinforced by research (Bednar et al., 1991). The pilot study helped to identify parallels between the participating teachers and myself, as a lifelong learner. Some of the identifying characteristics from the study were collegiality, ongoing training, onsite feedback, and motivation from student success. Participating teachers validated their own achievements by the accomplishments of the students. A noticeable change in consciousness was evidenced by teacher commitment and continual teacher growth.

For educators, there are several obstacles to achieving the goal of continuous learning. Some impediments may be related to school culture. The culture of the school must support continuous

inquiry and reflection on the protecting and nurturing of research-based approaches to ensure that all students will achieve. If the goal of high academic standards and achievement for all students is to be realized, effective continuous professional development must be maintained as a systemic process. Undoubtedly, creating the time needed to practice such learning is difficult, and there is a need to provide guidance, showing teachers how to locate and evaluate resources, and how to critically apply new knowledge in their classroom practices. Besides the professional difficulties, there also may be personal barriers to learning: family obligations, health issues, and the like.

Therefore, this dissertation has several purposes. The study hopes to identify quality characteristics of professional development that will help learners acquire the skills needed to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning to empower teachers to regulate their own professional development. The study seeks to identify teachers' perspectives of facilitators and barriers to their professional learning.

Ultimately, the researcher hopes to answer the following questions:

- Can the improved practice of providing quality professional development opportunities provide teachers with the opportunities to participate in learning activities?
- What facilitators enhance teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?
- What barriers limit teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of education through developing professionalism and capabilities of teachers. The study will review the range of factors that are characterized as quality attributes of professional development. Further, the research will attempt to interpret the perceptions of teachers and render explicit their processes to understanding through reflexive interpretation of their experiences with learning opportunities. This study

acknowledges that teachers' motivation to learn is problematic, in that there are factors that encourage learning and features that discourage learning. Some of the more discouraging aspects may be in the context of the job or in teachers' personal lives.

For example, I have experienced both personal barriers and personal facilitators. As a single mother of two for eleven years, I had the burden of paying babysitters when I attended evening classes (a barrier). However, single motherhood also accelerated the desire to return to college for an advanced degree because I had hoped that through higher education, I would receive a promotion or could become more mobile, since an additional college degree offered more options (a facilitator). I have received encouragement to learn through the support of family and friends (a personal facilitator). Finally, the emotional strength that is mine through an increased knowledge base has been a powerful intrinsic personal facilitator.

The nature of teaching demands that teachers engage in continuing career-long professional development. Teachers are understood to have ongoing professional needs that can be met through continuity and progression. Self-regulated learners seize these opportunities as a constant quest for improved performance. By listening to teachers' voices, this researcher hopes to understand professional values and perspectives, which influence teachers to participate in learning opportunities or adversely, factors that hinder participation in learning. Teacher development must take into account the components of the substantive self of the teacher and the psychological and social settings that can encourage or discourage learning.

Through evaluation of teacher perspectives of facilitators and barriers to educators' participation in learning, this report will examine the relationship between school culture and professional development that attributes to continuous learning as well as the personal facilitators and barriers that affect teachers' learning.

Through teacher surveys and interviews, this dissertation will evaluate facilitators and barriers to educators' participation in learning opportunities and will assist in identifying quality professional development characteristics. This report will (1) identify a general approach to addressing the delivery of quality professional development; and (2) discuss the possible

facilitators and barriers, based on teachers' perceptions, to educators acquiring the skills and engaging in the activities that characterize quality professional development.

Need for the Study

School districts are struggling to meet demands of No Child Left Behind (2001) by successfully attaining goals of proficiency on standardized testing. The teaching profession has generated useful information about successful practices, and research demonstrates that instruction has more impact on learning than any other factor. Providing quality professional development opportunities for educators is essential to meeting the demands of the classroom.

When I survey the shelves and files in my office, I can identify an abundance of materials from professional development trainings in which I have participated in throughout my years in education. I learned that I could teach Science and Social Studies through children's literature, only to find out later that I should teach reading through those content areas. I was educated in teaching the Five-step Writing Process, using hands-on manipulatives for mathematics and science, and trained in the use of Guiding Reading, Whole Language, and theme-based developments. Initiatives, like Reading First and Outcomes Based Education, and changes to laws, for example No Child Left Behind and PL 94-142 and IDEA, have required my attention at professional development sessions. Knowledge about Cooperative Learning Strategies and Student Assistance Programs has taught me to deal with social and emotional skills as related to academics. Data interpretation, pre-referral interventions, health and wellness, school safety, bully prevention, tolerance, special education changes, and inspired leadership are other matters needing consideration at professional development trainings. These are but a few of the numerous opportunities for learning that I have experienced, and the quantity of preparation is not unique to me. Teachers and educators continue to learn about teaching and school applications throughout their careers. Yet, as I contemplate on my early years of teaching, even my own childhood schooling, I don't see vast changes in the classrooms of today. A recently retired teacher said to me, "I wish I would have recorded my words the first week of school, thirty-seven years ago, because I have said the exact same thing every day since then." One may

contemplate on the familiar saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." However, after thirty-seven years of schooling, surely improvements were likely.

On the other hand, there are teachers who I have watched change dramatically in the classrooms, and I believe that I also have modified my own teaching style. When I consider the reasons for the changes that I can identify in the classrooms and through my own reflections, I attribute the transformations to quality professional development.

Why do teachers continue to participate in professional development if changes in the classrooms are not the goals? One answer is that many states mandate a particular number of hours of professional development to maintain certification; for example, in Pennsylvania, 180 Act 48 hours (Professional Development) are required every five years. *Through my own experience, I believe a more accurate answer to the question is that teachers are looking for the magic key to instruction. Somewhere out there is a trick or a secret formula that will help instructors reach all students, not only the average and the above average students, but also those labeled or not yet unidentified as having Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Autism, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Learning Disabilities, Behavioral Disorders, family dysfunctions, and other problems.*

I am reminded of trying to reach Megan, a kindergarten child who had problems with achievement. A driver of a car killed her when her mother was at a bar and left Megan at home alone. Her picture hung in the school hallway until she would have graduated from elementary school.

I remember tutoring a sixth grader, Larry, in my office because he was having trouble turning in assignments. Larry learned quickly, and it puzzled me that he was having trouble with his grades. The mystery was resolved when four members of his family were killed over a drug deal, and although he lived, Larry was shot and stabbed. When he was placed in the Witness Protection Program with foster parents, who later adopted him, Larry did very well with his academics.

His mother sometimes pushed Hudson out of the car in front of the school in the mornings.

Four siblings hid under the table in my conference room after telling me about how their dad shot their dog in front of them to punish them for something they had done at home.

Calvin is Autistic. He requires a one-on-one aide to keep him off the floor and awake during class. Ben has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. I have traces of permanent marker on my office door from one of his incidents of rage. Mariah is Emotionally Disturbed. She sometimes curls up into a ball under the playground slide. Jacob talks to his imaginary friends named Tide and Shout.

Many children remain in my memory. Some will be with me forever. These are the children that educators are trying to reach. What is the magic formula? As evidenced in the children I have mentioned above, potential does not always equal success. Although research informs us that using best practices almost ensures that student achievement will improve, individual differences must be taken into account, as well. There are no templates for excellence in the classrooms when individual differences are numerous. Yet, educators seek to reach all students.

As a principal, I am reminded over and over again that my chief responsibility to the school is to act as an instructional leader. On a quest to lead my faculty in using best practices and to change instruction to improve student achievement, I promote growth in my faculty and in other educators by using collaboration time for trainings, teaching evening programs in my school district and at local universities, sharing educational journal articles, presenting at conferences, and the like. As I reminisce on my endeavors, my goal actually is to facilitate lifelong learning. As teachers foster lifelong learners in classrooms, it is my ambition that the educators will also become lifelong learners.

Despite the mushrooming availability of best practices, research-based practices, and evidence-based practices, changes in classrooms are not apparent. With technological advances, the accessibility to multi-modalities in presentations and student products gives rise to reaching differing learning styles, yet many educators are not taking advantage of these opportunities.

11

Why is so much time spent on best practices and evidenced-based applications when teachers continue to teach the way they were taught (Silva, 2005)? Are there ways to ensure that the new methodologies will be applied when teachers leave a professional development opportunity and return to the classroom? Is it possible to help teachers move into a new level of growth and understanding, which will help students achieve and also encourage continuous learning for the teacher?

In the pursuit of excellence, in the quest to be the best instructor, an educator must weigh the conclusion of two possibilities: (1) try anything and everything that he or she reads about, hears about, thinks about, and sees; or (2) use best practices, based on proven, evidence-based research. A teacher's role is to serve the students. Access to a magical formula may be more complicated to obtain than simply using what has already been proven to work. Knowing that everyone believes he is an expert at education because of the experience on the other side of the teacher's desk, I look to the research for expertise.

Learning best practices in education does not always result in the use of the best practices in the classrooms. When the curriculum development movements in the early 1960's talked of creating teacher-proof standardized curricula, the actions failed to address issues of content, student background and individual differences, and quality of teaching. In addition, standardization does not allow for testing the implicit or the hidden curriculum, often thought to prepare youngsters for the real world. Continuing to change to meet the needs of a changing economy, educational reform must attempt to look at the qualitative aspects of schooling, including the process and the product, not merely the quantitative standardized scores.

There are common reasons why innovations are failing. School organization is decentralized and gives teachers enormous autonomy (Leu, 2004), even if their formal authority seems quite limited. They have plenty of room to ignore, turn aside, pervert or frustrate the innovations' intentions. Therefore, the teaching practice is relatively immobile (Cohen, 1988).

The conditions of teaching also contribute to the immobility of change. Teachers often work with curriculum they did not devise, materials they did not choose or do not like, schedules with little flexibility, and little preparation time. The workloads are heavy, offering instruction in a great range of subjects or the same subject to many students, not to mention the duties of monitoring, paperwork, and extra curricular activities. This combination does not enhance the teachers' inclinations to try something new (Cohen, 1988).

Other innovations have limitations as well. For example, integrating technology often comes with shortages on equipment, training, or lack of adaptation to the current curriculum (Pearl, 2006). The expectation of teachers' work to be much more innovative if these conditions are absent is presumed. Yet in colleges, universities, and private schools, these conditions are quite the opposite, and still, reports suggest that it is remarkably similar to what is observed in public schools (Cohen, 1988). Since World War I, expenditures for schools have grown astonishingly. Class sizes have shrunk nearly in half. Books and other materials are plentiful, interesting, and varied. Yet there is little evidence that change in instruction has become easier or more rapid (Cohen, 1988).

"What is the best system to educate students?" There are many theories attempting to answer this question. (Goodlad, 2004; Apple, 1990). Public schools have been somewhat successful under the circumstances of changing societies, the individual needs of learners, and attempting to educate all children. Societal, political, and business goals help educators define what the goals of the school should be. Restructuring schools for the individual rather than for the masses seems idealistic until funds of the school systems are considered. Professional development can help bring innovative teaching, individualization, and creativity (Marczely, 1996). There is a great deal of evidence to guide teachers and school leaders in best practices and comprehensive school reform, and there is strong evidence that successful programs and practices can be replicated (Wagner, 2004).

Many have tried to answer these questions:
- What are best practices for educating students?

- If best practices are identified, will teachers value the new knowledge and continue to assess strengths and weaknesses to improve in a particular area?
- Are there common facilitators and barriers to teacher learning?

The teaching profession has generated invaluable research about effective practices. When implemented even by beginning teachers, these practices practically guarantee achievement gains. Research demonstrates that instruction has more impact on learning than any other factor (Reeves, 2006; Marzano, 2003; Sanders and Horn, 1994). Still, researchers (Schmoker, 2007; Wagner, 2004; Elmore,2000; Odden and Kelley, 2002) question the reasons for the underuse of the knowledge base. The lack of accountability to the deficient use of best practices in the classrooms may be attributed to the fact that teachers are free to engage in practices that are at odds with the most widely known elements of effective teaching and supervision. A discontent with existing practices and a desire to find a solution are rationales for educational reform.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Characteristics of Continuous Learning

Education as part of living is a theme that Basil Yeaxlee (1929) develops in the first book-length exploration of lifelong education. Some relevant chapters look to growing up; the permanent need for education; the student; the process of learning from life; nineteenth century prophets and pioneers; and the adult education movement in the twentieth century. More recently there has been a shift in the literature from lifelong education to lifelong learning. The shift may reflect a growing interest in learning beyond the classroom (Courtney, 1979). Bentley (1998) describes the shift as a modification of thinking about the organizational unit of education, from the school, an institution where learning is organized, defined and contained, to the learner, an intelligent agent with the potential to learn from any and all encounters with the world. The modification in thinking involves a shift in consciousness as one becomes aware of the process of learning.

Learning has been defined as "the systemic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills, and attitudes made necessary by the constantly changing conditions in which people now live." (Candy et al., 1994). Drucker (1994) notes that people have to learn how to learn, that subjects may matter less than the students' capacity to continue to learn and the motivation to learn. Lifelong learning requires that learning be alluring, that it become a high satisfaction in itself if not something the individual craves.

The process of growth and development in the teaching profession represents a common value among education professionals. Continual learning in the field of education may include subscribing to professional journals, attending conferences, participating in research projects, and collaborating with other teachers (Brown, 1994; Crandall, 1991; Diaz-Rico, 1998).

One way to approach professional development is to view it as a cognitive process internal to the learner that can occur both incidentally and in planned educational activities (Merriam and

Brockett, 1997). Economic, social, and cultural changes indicate that many now live in informational societies that have strong individualizing tendencies and requirements for permanent learning (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Field (2000) suggests that it is common to regard the day-to-day practice of learning as routine. He argues that many adults take part in organized learning throughout their lifespan and that non-formal learning permeates daily life. Examples of non-formal learning are short residential courses, study tours, fitness centers, sports clubs, heritage centers, self-help therapy manuals, electronic networks, and self-instructional videos. Fields continues that as individuals come to rely less on traditional institutions and authority figures associated with them – church leaders, parents, aristocracy – to guide their behavior, they become more self-directed.

Results of a graduate study from the University of Bristol, England identifies elements of an individual's capacity of lifelong learning. The team of researchers describes learning power as 'a form of consciousness characterized by particular dispositions, values and attitudes, with a lateral and temporal connectivity.' The study suggests that learning power can be identified through seven dimensions: changing and learning, critical curiosity, meaning making, creativity, learning relationships, strategic awareness and resilience (Deakin Crick et al., 2008). In addition, the team found key themes of learner interaction as follows: teacher professional commitment, relationships, dialogue, language of learning, modeling and imitation, reflection, learner self-awareness, choice and responsibility and sequencing of context as central to a climate conducive to building learning power.

Motivation for learning comes in different forms. At times, motivation may be situational, for example for educational or employment purposes, while other times an individual or topical need may arise, like exploring a hobby or a current medical condition. To address the needs of this study, consideration will be given to the components of information that would serve a teacher's individual lifelong educational and professional needs. As educators engage in professional development, teachers share a common purpose of enhancing the ability to execute the work. At the heart of professional development is the individual's interest in learning and increasing skills and knowledge in the profession.

Several studies of teachers' career experiences and the most influential determinants on those experiences are those of Swiss Secondary School teachers by Michael Huberman (1995), of English teachers by Sikes et al (1985), and of American teachers by Fessler and Christensen (1992). The work of these researchers suggests that teachers pass through five broad phases: Launching, Stabilization, New Challenges, Reaching a Professional Plateau, and the Final Stage. Each of the stages accounts for different levels of learning, development, and the support needs. During these phases, teachers are said to experience changing levels of motivation, disenchantment, personal commitments, acceptance, and the like. Understanding that teachers will move in and out of phases of development in response to environmental and personal influences, designers of professional development must plan for relevance to the teachers' needs.

The aim of continuing professional development is deceptively simple. It is only through teacher development that the quality of students' learning opportunities can be assured. It is also vital to the maintenance and development of teachers' commitment. It is the quality of the professional development opportunities throughout their careers and the culture in which they work which will influence the teachers' promotion of lifelong learning values.

The Requirement of Professional Development

As an elementary school principal, I view myself as a continuation of a classroom teacher. I can see the positive changes in myself as a result of my experiences and my education. For example, I am more confident and self-assured, and I feel secure in questioning curriculum, pedagogical practices, and structures of the system of education. I can understand the pressures of the No Child Left Behind (2001) requirements for teachers and for school districts, and therefore acknowledge the practices of providing professional development in academic content areas that are evaluated by standardized tests. However, I see practices, which are not researched-based, that are carried out only to assist with test scores. I sheepishly admit to directing practices that I do not believe in, only to help with test scores. For example, when interventions are limited, I have directed their use for students in tested grades rather than for early intervention, where I know the interventions would help the most. With a high mobility rate at my school, I wonder if

17

the students in primary grades will still be in my school when they reach grade levels that are assessed. No Child Left Behind (2001) has forced educators to participate in practices that go against theory and research.

Continuing calls for raising the standards of teaching have brought forth efforts to ensure that all teachers participate in regular in-service trainings, so that they remain up to date with content knowledge of curriculum and assessment, classroom organization and management, teaching strategies, and leadership.

Federal Law, No Child Left Behind (2001) mandates that teachers maintain the status of highly qualified educator by requiring states to develop plans for professional development. The Administration's proposal for preparing, training and recruiting teachers is based upon the basic principle that teacher excellence is vital to achieving improvement in student achievement. States are accountable for ensuring that all children are taught by effective teachers and for developing a plan to ensure this goal will be met. The states have the support and flexibility necessary to improve academic achievement through such initiatives as providing high-quality training for teachers that is grounded in scientific research.

As professionals in an ever-changing society, the states' educators are required to continuously upgrade the knowledge and skill set – just as lawyers and doctors are expected to update knowledge bases. For example, Pennsylvania's professional development law, known as Act 48 of 1999 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2007), describes the requirements that apply to all certified educational professionals as education that shall be designed to meet the education needs of school entities and their professional employees, so that they may meet the specific needs of students they are serving. The Act also should fill educational gaps in the educator's professional development and must be based on sound research and promising practices. It must be part of an approved plan for building educators' skills over the long term. All certified educators must complete 180 hours of professional development that complies with their school district's plan every five years. Educators must earn continuing professional education credits to maintain active certification. In summary, the state law maintains that teachers must continue to study.

The process by which educators keep their knowledge base current typically is referred to as professional development. There are two types of professional development: (1) mandated; and (2) choice of professional development to enhance ones own learning. It is possible that the two types of learning may overlap. For example, school districts often provide training for teachers under the guidelines of Act 48 (and other state department laws) to meet the needs of a specific school district. These needs may be based on a new textbook series, changes to special education laws, data analysis by school building, and the like. Again, these types of professional development topics would be based on the needs of the school district, and the professionals may be given little or no choice about participation. These would obviously be mandated trainings. In other circumstances, professionals may be given options regarding participation in learning. For example, districts may provide break-out sessions during an in-service day giving educators a choice in which programs to partake. Conferences, if not mandated, offer professionals alternatives in their learning. Formal education also provides professionals a selection of learning topics. It is possible for mandates and professional choice to correspond. A case in point would be when a formal course is chosen by a professional, but the credit hours accrued for the course also meet the guidelines of required hours of professional development by the State Department of Education. It is also true that a school district may mandate sessions where the topics are of great interest to the professional.

Both the profession and the public expect that teachers have the willingness and the ability to engage in continuous learning.

Quality Characteristics of Professional Development

If a preferred method of becoming a constant learner in the field of education is through experiencing quality professional development, then it is necessary to identify those characteristics. It is the responsibility of the educator to understand that professional development is not merely a means to an end, but rather is a means to become an educated person.

Knowing that states are responsible for requiring professional development that is based on sound research and promising practices, developers of professional development opportunities must seek the answer to the following question. What are characteristics of professional development that improve the practice of teaching?

The literature is clear on the sense that the thing that most strongly motivates teachers to engage in teaching and in the improvement of their practice is evidence of student learning. Student achievement is positively correlated with the extent of teacher participation in quality professional development (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005). When educators perceive that a new skill is related to student achievement, they are more likely to embrace the skill (NASDSE, 2007). To be most effective, professional development should include two important elements for the experience to be useful and engaging. Most essential is learning for the teachers on an adult level, addressing questions and content of interest to them. The second element involves transfer to the classroom. Teachers understandably want professional development experiences to be relevant to classroom practice, but that shouldn't diminish the importance of their own learning.

Elmore (2002) at the National Press Club "Research on the Role of Quality Professional Development in Raising Student Achievement: A Forum" comments on how to link professional development successfully to the improvement of practice. The presenter elaborates that most models of professional development-- successful models of professional development -- have a clear working theory of adult learning. These models tend to stress collegiality, common purpose, the generation of collegial support, and tends to be highly focused on the work rather than giving people general principles and ideas as motivation to do the work. People change beliefs and norms and expectations about student learning based on practice. Constructing high-powered professional development systems that are linked to instructional improvements push hard against the existing culture of schools and school systems and against society's beliefs about what teaching is and who teachers are. Discussions should become professional expectations, reinforced by the fact that every successful lesson or unit be analyzed for what made it effective. Self-directed learning is a similar tool used to increase efforts in improvement.

20

The U.S. Department of Education Professional Development Team used available research to create a set of principles for staff development. According to their study, high quality professional development: (1) focuses on teachers as central to student learning; (2) focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement; (3) respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of individuals within the school community; (4) reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership; (5) enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, and technology; (6) promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; (7) involves collaborative planning; (8) requires substantial time and other resources; (9) is driven by a coherent long-term plan; and (10) is assessed by its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning (U.S. Department of Education Professional Development Team, 1994).

Similar to the U.S. Department of Education Professional Development Team's principles, the Professional Development Project of the National Institute for Science Education (NISE) is discussed by Susan Loucks-Horsely (1996). The researcher presents seven principles that are found in excellent professional development experiences for science and mathematics educators: developing a clear, well-defined image of effective classroom learning and teaching; providing teachers with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and teaching approaches; using instructional methods to promote learning for adults, which mirror the methods used with students; strengthening the learning community of science and mathematics teachers; preparing and supporting teachers to be leaders; providing links to other parts of the educational system; and making continuous assessment part of the professional development process.

Professional development is something that often is delivered to teachers without opportunities for follow up, little or no time for individual or collective reflection, and little testing of new ideas and information. For teachers to transfer knowledge of best practices to application of these strategies in the classroom, instructors should set goals for use of the newly acquired information. As Dewey (1934) notes,

> "…nothing takes root in mind when there is no balance between doing and receiving. Some decisive action is needed in order to establish contact with the realities of the world and in order that impressions may be so related to facts that their value is tested and organized."

It is estimated that for teachers to engage in new techniques, the instructors will need twenty to forty hours of preparation (Torgeson, 2003). For educators to master new teaching techniques, research has determined the following requirements:

- Theory (answers "why?" and focuses on educator knowledge).

- Demonstration (opportunity to see new practice applied).

- Practice (25 trials using the skill).

- Feedback (provided promptly by peers of "experts" who are trusted).

- Preparation (Leadership, Team Building, and Professional Development for Response to Intervention).

Changes in practice depend on a sustained and targeted professional development focus on particular content knowledge and instructional strategies (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005). Cohen and Hill (2000) found that professional development focused on specific curricula resulted in more reform-oriented practice than more general professional development. Reform-oriented teacher instruction was positively related to student achievement. These researchers suggest that for classroom practice to change, professional learning opportunities should be:

- Grounded in the curricula that students study,

- Embedded with an aligned system and connected to several elements of instruction (e.g. assessments, curriculum), and

- Extended in time, with time built in for practice, coaching, and follow-ups.

Other important qualities of professional development associated with teacher instructional change and student achievement are collective participation in professional development; coherent approaches to improving student learning with policies and materials aligning with the professional development focus; and aspects of active learning, in which teachers participate in the same types of sense-making activities that the students would (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005).

Porter et. al. (2000) affirm the value of focused professional development among other aspects of quality that, when present, intensify the effects on teacher instruction, including professional development of a reform-type (teacher networks or study groups rather than a workshop or

presentation), consistency with teacher goals, and collective participation. Collective participation helps to create a broader base of understanding by including teachers from the same subject, grade, or school.

The Longitudinal Study of Teacher Change, from the National Evaluation of the Eisenhower Program (Garet et. al., 1999) concluded that professional development is effective when it focuses on the following specific higher-order teaching strategies: (1) the use of technology for higher-order learning, (2) the use of instructional methods for higher-order learning, and (3) the use of assessment strategies for higher-order student learning. Other features of quality professional development included reform type, collective participation, active learning, and coherence.

Pilot Study: Looking at Quality Characteristics of Professional Development

The extensive research on successful characteristics of professional development with respect to changes in the instructional environment served as a stimulus for this study. I conducted a pilot study as a qualitative research analysis to identify professional development characteristics that most strongly influence teachers to change instruction within their classrooms.

I relied on the work of several theorists who look at stages of development, such as Ken Wilber's *Theory of Everything* (2001), and Clare Graves and Don Beck's *Spiral Dynamics* (2006). Beck's work comes from studying the late Graves and is based on a spiral, in which colors are used to describe stages (or memes) of values. Questions are answered about how people think rather than what they think. The spiral offers perspectives on why people make decisions in different ways, why people respond to different motivators, and why and how values arise and spread. Beck has used his theory in diverse situations, such as among groups of people in businesses, in large corporations, in local communities, and even entire countries.

The following is a description of the color-coding (Table 1), according to Don Beck's first tier of *Spiral Dynamics* (2006). The color scheme is described in an abbreviated format for the reader's referral.

Table 1

Don Beck's Spiral Dynamics

First Tier:		
Beige	Survivalistic	Requires subsistence needs be met in order to remain alive
Purple	Magical	Nurtured through observing rituals, finding reassurance, and by expressing a sense of enchantment in life's mystery
Red	Impulsive	Excited by stories of company heroes, by celebrating feats of conquest, and by evidence of respect, locates the cause of failures and difficulties outside of self, breaking loose from the clan and exerting independent control, guilt is absent as problems are always someone else's fault
Blue	Purposeful	Reinforced through appeals to traditions, recognition of rules, fair treatment for all, and by honoring length of service and loyalty, finding meaning and purpose in living, sacrifices self to the way for deferred reward, bring order and stability to all things, divine plan assigns people to their places, absolutistic
Orange	Achievist	Exercised by displaying symbols of success, individuals being recognized for their achievements, and challenges for improvement, polychronic time (many irons in the fire at once), growth and expansion
Green	Communitarian	Enhanced by stressing the importance of all people, exploring the inner-beings of self and others, responsiveness to feelings, and a caring socially responsible global community, share society's resources among all, liberate humans from greed and dogma, reach decisions through consensus, refresh spirituality and bring harmony

Table 2 illustrates characteristics that the literature review contributes to quality professional development. These factors were then referenced to a color code based on Beck's spiral.

Table 2

Characteristics of Professional Development Identified in Literature Review

Characteristics of Professional Development	Beck's Memes
Evidence of Student Achievement	Orange
Theory of Adult Learning	Red
Collegiality Green	
Common Purpose	Green
Support Green	
Focus on Content Area	Red
Focus on Strategies	Red
Prior Knowledge	Red
Standards or Objectives	Red
Analysis of Assessments	Orange
Analysis of Lessons for Effectiveness	Orange
Analysis of Student Work	Orange
Collaboration Green	
Self-analysis or Reflection	Orange
Resources Green	
Well-defined Image of Classroom Teaching	Blue
Time to Develop Skills	Blue
Training Includes Active Learning	Blue
Preparing Teachers to be Leaders	Orange
Links to Other Parts of Educational System	Blue
Continuous Assessment	Orange
Demonstration of New Practice	Red/Blue
Feedback Orange	
Collective Participation	Green
Technology Green	

The professional development characteristics that were ranked under the highest meme or the Green Meme were Collegiality, Collective Participation, Common Purpose, Support, and Collaboration. From the information learned in this study, onsite collegiality and evidence of student achievement are strong motivators for intensification of professional development.

This information coincides with Saphier's and King's (1985) work on school culture in which twelve healthy cultural norms were identified: collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to the knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring celebration and humor, involvement in decision making, protection of what's important, traditions, and honest and open communication. These factors affect the capacity of a school to improve and also promote learning.

Hargreaves (1994) has written about forms of school culture, which have different implications for teachers' work and professional development. Hargreaves identifies broad forms of school culture: individualism, balkanization, collaboration, and contrived collegiality. The culture of individualization must be accompanied by professional development opportunities in which knowledge, wisdom and expertise can be shared and through which collective visions of good teaching can be compared to individual realities. Balkanization also separates. Balkanization groups teachers together for purposes of departments or grade levels and then separates from the whole by competition for resources, status, and influence. Collaboration can add to school improvement and teacher development; however it may also have limitations. Collaboration may masquerade as cooperation and still lend to individualization once teachers return to classrooms. Hargreaves describes contrived collegiality as being 'fixed in time and space and predictable' (1994, p 195). Contrived collegiality is described as a mandated collaboration. Each of these forms of school cultures has the potential to both promote and inhibit the capacities for professional development.

Professional development is not something that can be forced, because it is the teacher who develops (actively), and not the teacher who is developed (passively) (Day, 1999). Unwillingness or inability to change may be due to personal or professional issues and values of the teacher, lack of self-confidence, or the cultural contexts of the work. Most individuals are conservative

(Schon, 1971), and unless change is relevant, unless the individual is ready to engage in change, and unless support is assured, teachers will be unlikely to give more than the minimum attention required by those who insist upon it.

Chapter Three

Design Method

My interpretations of this research have caused me to reevaluate the pieces of my own personality. The information learned has caused me to reenter places in my past that I had forgotten, but are part of which I am. As I interview teachers and analyze results from the data, I move in and out of roles that I have played: administrator, student, teacher, colleague, friend, daughter, and mother. As I recollect these roles, I contemplate which parts of my character have impacted my interpretations of this dissertation. What experiences in my past have influenced my analysis of the information in this study? I recognize changes within certain roles that I have held. For example, in the role of school administrator, I have gained knowledge about leadership after years of experience. I have learned that I can accomplish much more by instilling leadership qualities in my teachers, than by trying to do many things on my own. As an administrator in a low income school and the pressures of expected proficiency rates, I often experience a feeling of angst. I struggle with knowing what is best for students, yet sometimes practicing what is convenient to quickly raise test scores. These are not the responses that I had expected of myself. In this role, I also question professional mindsets versus the role of the unions. I am reminded of a recent experience I had as a member of the negotiations team for my school district. One of the issues was to shorten or eliminate an established collaboration period for elementary teachers. Although I strongly believe that collaboration can be a valuable professional development tool, I had witnessed fifteen years of misuse of this time. This was frequently a time when teachers copied papers, came in late, ordered lunches, and the like. The language of the local association contract limited the amount of directed collaboration time by administrators, and therefore the misuses of time became issue for eliminating or shortening the collaboration time. This illustrates the impact of labor contracts as they pertain to professional development.

I re-imagine my own learning styles as a student, as I interpret the learning styles of teachers in professional development opportunities. Similarly, I contemplate on my teaching techniques as I interpret the teachers' perceptions of quality learning experiences. Am I meeting their

expectations? I recollect conversations with people who have touched my life and supported my professional endeavors, as well as those who have come in and out of my life, remaining as a part of me. Have I shared knowledge with colleagues as often as I could have? Have I been supportive of others in the profession?

In my familial roles, I have experienced the biggest joys and the deepest sorrows. Seeking approval as a daughter and acting with unconditional love as a caregiver, I experience the shift of roles from child to parent. Failing as a wife, I move to a role of independence and become protective of myself and of my children. Have my struggles with being a single mother and breadwinner impacted my interpretations regarding gender differences?

Do others see me the way that I perceive myself? These shifting roles from teacher to student, from colleague to mentor, from parent to child are the movements of an educator. The context that is brought to a content area through experiences and background gives meaning and connections to instruction. By sharing experiences and pieces of who we are, teachers bring a sense of reference to their teachings. I see the changes that have taken place in me through my experiences. By reflecting on these understandings, I hope to bring that awareness to the interpretations of the perceptions of teachers.

Mixed methods, including researching the literature, surveying teachers, and interviewing teacher leaders, help explore the Guiding Questions. The literature review identifies quality characteristics of professional development, and the pilot study places those characteristics into a hierarchy using the theories of Don Beck's Spiral Dynamics (2006) and Abraham Maslow's (1999) Hierarchy of Needs. The conclusive information from the two hierarchies identifies Collegiality, Collective Participation, Common Purpose, Support, and Collaboration as characteristics that support quality professional development, which coincides with Saphier's and King's (1985) work on school culture in which twelve healthy cultural norms are identified: collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to the knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring, celebration and humor, involvement in decision making, protection of what is important, traditions, and honest and open communication.

Secondly, the design method includes a survey, which compares teachers' perceptions of the facilitators and barriers to participation in professional development opportunities. Quality professional development characteristics, as identified in the pilot study, are also questioned in the survey.

By also interviewing four teachers thought to be continual learners as identified by administrators from separate districts, I capture and confirm perspectives.

Triangulation of the data is established through the literature review, the surveys, and the interviews. The use of multiple districts increases the probability of yielding reliable results.

Demographics are considered in the surveys and interviews, for example gender, years of teaching experience, levels of higher education, years within the same district, years within the present school, and a range of grade levels and subject areas taught. The identities of the participants are anonymous, resulting in no harm to the participants.

I manage and analyze data by compiling the survey results and deciphering notes after each interview. A case processing summary for the reliability of all Likert items reports 77.7% validity and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistic of .525. Cross tabulations evaluate the relationships between demographic information and professional development questions in the survey. A factor analysis indicates that fourteen factors are present in the survey. If someone were to replicate this study, the researcher may consider further exploration of the information that teachers identify in this study as being the most pertinent facilitators and barriers to their learning, limiting the number of factors to be studied. Possible audiences for this study may include those who are establishing professional development models or anyone who is looking at change agents.

Participants

Participants for the surveys include willing teachers from four randomly selected school districts, two from Pennsylvania and two from West Virginia. Superintendents from the districts were contacted by telephone and confirmed by postal letter or email letter for permission to email teachers from the districts to participate in the study. The superintendent also identified a teacher within the district that demonstrates characteristics of a continuous learner. The researcher contacted the identified teachers to participate in face-to-face interviews. The participating districts were randomly selected from the website http://www.greatschools.net/schools/districts/ and participated in the study with the superintendents' permission. (Please see Appendix A: Confirmation Letter to the Superintendents.)

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009) is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education, and therefore reports the following statistics regarding the four participating school districts. Table 3 displays the information. The four participating school districts vary in locale status as follows: city, town, large suburb, and rural. The total number of schools per district indicates discrepancies in the characteristics of the districts, ranging from five and six total schools per district to 28 and 30 schools per district. The grade span is kindergarten through grade twelve in the smaller districts, while the two larger school districts include pre kindergarten through grade 12. The total number of students per district varies from 2,616 in the smallest school district to 13,554 in the largest district. The total number of teachers per district contrasts, as well, ranging from 172, 238, 615, and 777. The student to teacher ratio is fairly consistent at 17 and 18 students per teacher, with the smallest district ratio at 15 students per teacher. The number of administrators varies from 7 to 53. Revenue percentages clearly indicate discrepancies in the amount of federal support (based on socio economic need), state support, and local support (based on property taxes). Based on the percentages of federal and local support, district three receives the least amount of federal support (1%), while it collects the highest amount of local revenue (77%). Percentages of white students under the age of 18 are fairly consistent, ranging from 95.6% to 97.5%.

Table 3

Characteristics of Participating School Districts

District	Locale	Number of Schools	Grades	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student: Teacher Ratio	Number of Admin.	% Revenue by Federal, Local, State
1	City	28	Pre K - 12	13,554	777	17.4	53	9 31 60
2	Town	30	Pre K - 12	11,279	615	18.3	46	13 30 57
3	Suburb	5	K - 12	4,337	238	18.2	12	1 77 22
4	Rural	6	K - 12	2,616	172	15.2	7	5 58 37

Additional characteristics of the school districts are important to note. District 1 met Adequate Yearly Progress goals for 2008 in both reading and math for the subgroup of all students, but failed to meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) for the subgroups of Students with Disabilities in both reading and math and for Economically Disadvantaged students in reading. Forty percent of the students are reportedly receiving free or reduced lunch, indicating low economic status. The state average for economically disadvantaged students is 50%. Spending per pupil is $9,496 compared to a state average of $9,497. Community demographics indicate that 91% of the district's adults have at least a high school diploma (state average is 83%) and 21% hold at least a Bachelor's Degree (state average is 17%). The state average of single-parent households is 9.3, while in District 1 there are 10.4% of single-parent households. Tables 4 and 5 show the ethnic variances and household income distributions.

District 2 met Adequate Yearly Progress goals for 2008 in both reading and math for the subgroup of all students, but failed to meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) for the subgroups of Students with Disabilities in both reading and math and for Economically Disadvantaged students in both reading and math. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch is

46.3%. The state average for economically disadvantaged students is 50%. Spending per pupil is $9,119 compared to a state average of $9,497. Community demographics indicate that 90.4% of the district's adults have at least a high school diploma (state average is 83%) and 20.6% hold at least a Bachelor's Degree (state average is 17%). District 2 reports that 8.0% of households are headed by single-parents, while the state average of single-parent households is at 9.3 Tables 4 and 5 show the ethnic variances and household income distributions.

District 3 met Adequate Yearly Progress goals for 2008 in both reading and math in all subgroups. Students in the subgroup of students with Individual Educational Plans or the Special Education subgroup met AYP through the Confidence Interval. Confidence intervals take into account the fact that the students tested in any particular year might not be representative of students in that school across the years. Confidence intervals control for this sampling error or variation across years to account for schools or subgroups that come very close to achieving their annual thresholds, thus meeting their specific AYP Targets. The United States Department of Education approved a 95% Confidence Interval (C.I.) in Pennsylvania for AYP performance calculations (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2009). The district reports 2.7% of the students are of low economic status. The state average for economically disadvantaged students is 30%. Spending per pupil is $7,977 compared to a state average of $9,675. Community demographics indicate that 97.1% of the district's adults have at least a high school diploma (state average is 87.4%) and 53.9% hold at least a Bachelor's Degree (state average is 26.4%). The state average of single-parent households is 4.3, while in District 3 there are 10% of single-parent households. Tables 4 and 5 show the ethnic variances and household income distributions.

District 4 met Adequate Yearly Progress goals for 2008 in both reading and math in all subgroups except IEP groups for math and the subgroup of Economically Disadvantaged in reading for the grade span of 9 – 12. The district reports 29.8% of the students are of low economic status. The state average for economically disadvantaged students is 30%. Spending per pupil is $7,630 compared to a state average of $9,675. Community demographics indicate that 82.4% of the district's adults have at least a high school diploma (state average is 87.4%) and 16.7% hold at least a Bachelor's Degree (state average is 26.4%). The state average of

single-parent households is 4.3, while in District 4 there are 6.7% of single-parent households. Tables 4 and 5 show the ethnic variances and household income distributions.

Table 4

Ethic Backgrounds of Students

	% White Students: District State	% Black Students: District State	% Asian Students: District State	% Hispanic Students: District State	% American Indian: District State
1 97		2	<1	<1	<1
	93	5	<1	<1	<1
2 96		3	<1	<1	<1
	93	5	<1	<1	<1
3 96		<1	3	<1	<1
	75	16	3	7	<1
4 97		1	1	<1	<1
	75	16	3	7	<1

Table 5

Household Income Distribution

	$150,000 +	$100,000 -$149,999	$75,000 - $99,999	$50,000 – $74,999	$30,000 – $49,999	$15,000 – $29,999	$0 - $14,999
1	3.9%	8.5%	10.3%	17.7%	23.7%	20.8%	15.2%
2	3.2%	7.4%	9.4%	17.3%	223%	22.3%	18.1%
3	28.2%	20.7%	12.9%	15.%	12.7%	6.9%	2.7%
4	3.1%	5%	10.1%	20.8%	26.1%	21.5%	13.6%

Table 3.2 shows little cultural diversity associated with racial or ethnical differences in the four school districts. The student populations are mostly white. Table 3.3 gives evidence that District 3 is more affluent than the other three participating districts with 28.2% of households having an income of $150,000 or more as compared to approximately 3% in the other three school districts.

The first five questions of the survey collect additional demographic information from individual participants. Since the demographical questions in the survey are used for specific calculation purposes of the data collection, they will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The locales are defined by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009) in Table 6.

Table 6

Definitions of Locales

Locale Type	Definition
City, Large	Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more.
City, Mid-size	Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000.
City, Small	Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population less than 100,000.
Suburb, Large	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population of 250,000 or more.
Suburb, Mid-size	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000.
Suburb, Small	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population less than 100,000.
Town, Fringe	Territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area.
Town, Distant	Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area.
Town, Remote	Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.
Rural, Fringe	Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.
Rural, Distant	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.

The four teachers that participate in the interviews for this research have the following characteristics:

- Two are in the middle of their careers with approximately 15 years of teaching, while the other two approach the end of their careers with 34 or more years of experience.
- All levels of public schooling are represented with one elementary teacher, one middle school teacher, one high school teacher, and one teacher who instructs students in grades four through twelve music.
- All of the educators had multiple certifications, degrees, and roles. For example, the high school AP English teacher acts as Department Chair and works part-time for the College Board as a Consultant, as a Trainer of Teachers, and as a Mentor of Trainers.
- One teacher is a special education teacher.
- All of the teachers who participated in the interviews were women.

To assist the reader, I have selected pseudo names for the four teachers based on categories of meaning taken from the website, Behind the Name (1996 – 2009). The names were selected based on a defining characteristic of each teacher. For example, the category of Authors and Poets was used to select a name for the English teacher. Table 3.5 is meant to help the reader with characteristics for each teacher that was interviewed.

Table 7

Pseudo Names of Interviewed Teachers

Name	Subject Taught	Grade Level	Category of Pseudo Name	District	Locale
Margaret	English	12	Authors and Poets	1	City
Cecelia	Music	4-12	Musicians	2	Town
Andie	Special Education	6-8	Painters and Sculptors	3	Suburb
Ayn	Elementary	5	Philosophers and Thinkers	4	Rural

Instrumentation

The online survey tool, Zoomerang, is the tool used to administer the survey and calculate results by tabulating response rates, filtering by question themes, and cross tabulating for comparison of demographic information. The results identify teachers' perceptions of facilitators and barriers to participation in professional development as well as characteristics that teachers believe are quality attributes of professional development. Survey calculations are triangulated with information from the literature review and pilot study regarding quality professional development and with information from the interviews. From the calculations, recommendations for quality professional development characteristics that lead to continuous learning within the profession of education are offered.

Procedures

Participants for the surveys include willing teachers from four randomly selected school districts, two from Pennsylvania and two from West Virginia. The participating districts were randomly selected from the website http://www.greatschools.net/schools/districts/ and participated in the study with the superintendents' permission. (Please see Appendix A: Confirmation Letter to the Superintendents.) Superintendents from the districts were contacted by telephone and confirmed by postal letter or email letter for permission to email teachers from the districts to participate in the study. Superintendents from each of the four contributing school districts disseminated the survey through email notification with the URL (Internet link) embedded within the email to access the survey. (Please see Appendix B: Survey Invitation.) Each of the four superintendents also identified one teacher that demonstrates characteristics of a continuous learner to be interviewed. (Please see Appendix F: Interview Invitation). The researcher contacted the identified teachers to participate in face-to-face interviews.

Timelines

The survey was launched on February 2, 2009 and closed on March 20, 2009 for a total of forty-seven (47) days. While a total of 1,802 teachers were invited to participate, the response overview indicates 371 visits to the survey, eight (8) partial completions, and 244 completions.

Completion does not include blank responses. The percentage of involvement is 14% of the teachers that were approached to participate.

An incentive for participation, a $50 gift card for Staples, was offered. However, only seventeen (17) of the contributing teachers indicated a desire to win the incentive. Therefore, the incentive does not appear to have stimulated teachers to respond to the survey.

Surveys and Interviews

The survey has four main parts, which are included in this document. The following components are included in the Appendixes:

- The Invitation (Please see Appendix B);
- The Introduction (Please see Appendix C);
- The Questions (Please see Appendix D); and
- The Closing (Please see Appendix E).

Four teachers that were identified by the superintendents participated in face-to-face interviews. The interviews had two parts, which are included in this document. The following components are included in the Appendixes:

- The Invitation (Please see Appendix F);
- The Introduction (Please see Appendix G); and
- The Questions (Please see Appendix H).

The following categories were used to group survey and interview questions into themes for purposes of analysis. The information is meant to lead to understanding teacher perspectives for each area.

- Attributes of a continuous learner;
- Characteristics that teachers believe are quality attributes of professional development.
- Teachers' perceptions of the facilitators to participation in professional development opportunities; and

- Teachers' perceptions of the barriers to participation in professional development opportunities.

Table 8 categorizes the survey questions and the interview questions by the four major themes.

Table 8

Categories of Survey Questions and Interview Questions

Attributes of a Continuous Learner

Question: Can the improved practice of providing quality professional development opportunities provide teachers with the opportunities to participate in learning activities?

Survey Question Numbers: 6, 7, 9, 14, 17, 23, 36, 37, 38, 39, 43

Interview Question Numbers: 2, 3, 6, 7
Facilitators to Participation in Professional Development

Question: What facilitators enhance teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?
Survey Question Numbers: 10, 11, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, 39, 48

Interview Question Numbers: 4

Negative Attributes of a Continuous Learner

Survey Question Numbers: 8, 17, 31, 45
Barriers to Participation in Professional Development

Question: What barriers limit teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?
Survey Question Numbers: 12, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25, 33, 34, 37

Interview Question Numbers: 5

Characteristics of Professional Development
Survey Question Numbers: 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses findings on teachers' perceptions to participating in professional development and the facilitators and barriers that they encounter when attempting to engage in learning activities. This chapter starts by presenting the demographic profile of the responders, the objectives, and the limitations. It moves to the analysis of the data from the survey and the interviews.

Ultimately, the researcher hopes to answer the following questions:

- Can the improved practice of providing quality professional development opportunities provide teachers with the opportunities to participate in learning activities?
- What facilitators enhance teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?
- What barriers limit teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?

Demographic Profiles of Respondents

The first part of the survey was designed to obtain information on the demographic characteristics of the responders and general information for classification. The graphics below present the demographic profile of the 252 participants.

According to the Digest of Educational Statistics (2001) the national percentage of female teachers is 79% versus 21% of male teachers in the kindergarten through grade 12 public school systems. The participation in this study reflects the national averages with input percentages equaling 72 % from female teachers and 28% from male instructors. Please see Table 9.

Table 9

Gender of Participants

Male 70		28%
Female 182		72%
Total	252	100%

In addition to gender statistics, the survey reports that sixty-eight (68) percent of the respondents earned a Master's Degree or higher. Please see Table 10. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009) reports 56% of teachers hold a Master's Degree or higher as compared to 68% in this sample. From the comparative selective characteristics, the sample gives an accurate representation of the population, which it is supposed to represent.

Table 10

Levels of Education

2. What is your highest level of education?		
Bachelor's Degree	20	8%
Bachelor's Degree plus 15 credits	24	10%
Bachelor's Degree plus 24 credits	39	15%
Master's Degree	83	33%
Master's Degree plus 15 credits	24	10%
Master's Degree plus 30 credits	58	23%
Doctoral Degree	4	2%
Total 252		100%

Further analysis shows that of the 70 male teachers, 58.5% hold a Master's Degree or higher, while 70.3% of the 182 females hold a Master's Degree or higher. Please see Figure 1.

Table 11 shows number of years of teaching experience. A combination of teachers with 1 – 5 years experience and twenty-six (26) or more years experience in teaching equals forty-five (45)

percent of respondents to the survey, which indicates that respondents are mainly from two ends of the experience spectrum, the beginning teachers and teachers approaching the end of their careers. A median of 14 years teaching experience is the national average (NCES, 2009), while the median range in the study is 11 – 15 years experience. From the survey results, 30% of the participating males and 20.9% of the participating females have 26 or more years of service.
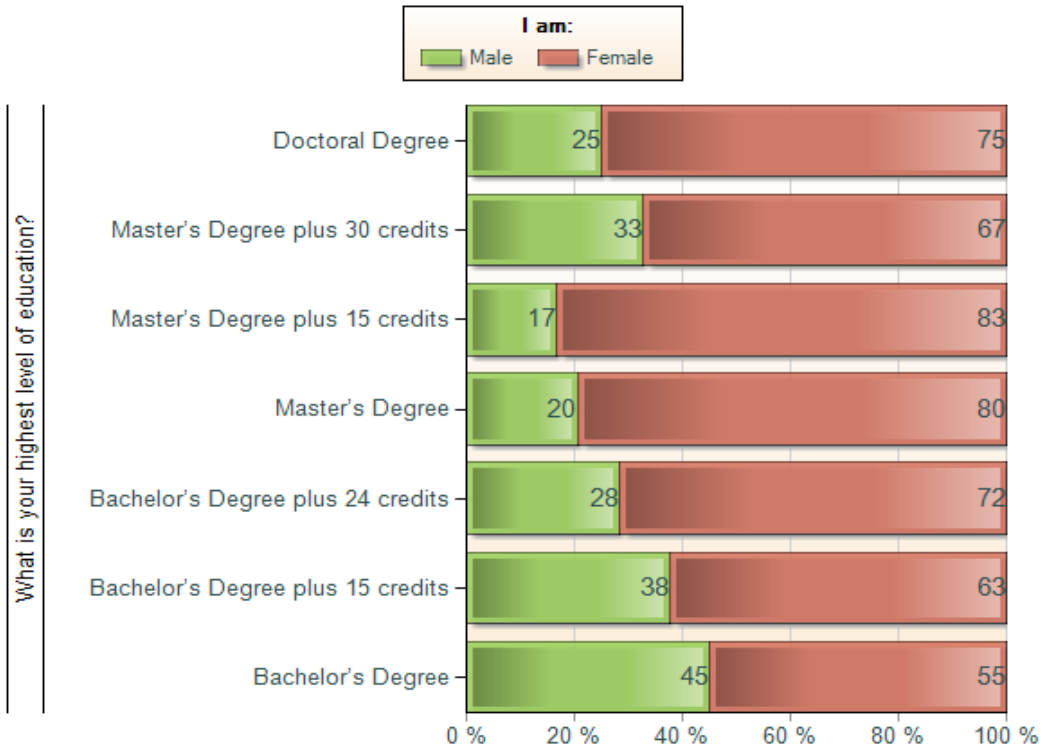
Figure 1. Levels of Education by Gender

Table 11

Years of Teaching

3. How many years have you been teaching?		
Years of Teaching	Number of Responses	Percent
1 – 5	59	23%
6 – 10	34	13%
11 –15	42	17%
16 – 20	37	15%
21 – 25	21	8%
26 or more	59	23%
Total 252		100%

Table 12 illustrates that teachers replying to the survey are largely in the present or current building for five years or less, which may be expected since twenty-three percent of the participants have 1 – 5 years total teaching experience. However, 18.6% of males and 7.7% of females report being in the same building for 26 or more years.

Representation from grade level ranges appears to be fairly consistent, with 19% from teachers from grades kindergarten through grade two, 22% from teachers of upper elementary grades, 20% from teachers from grades six through eight, and 25% from high school teachers. Participation from departmental teachers is fairly consistent ranging from four through eight percent. Please see Table 13.

Table 12

Years in Current Building

4. How many years have you taught in the present school or current building?		
1 – 5	116	46%
6 – 10	45	18%
11 -- 15	39	16%
16 – 20	12	5%
21 – 25	12	5%
26 or more	27	11%
Total 251		100%

Table 13

Grade Levels or Departments

5. In what grade level or departments do you teach?		
Grades Kdg. through 2	47	19%
Grades 3 – 5	54	22%
Grades 6 – 8	49	20%
Grades 9 – 12	62	25%
Math 17		7%
Business 4		2%
Science 19		8%
History/Social Studies	13	5%
Language Arts	20	8%
Fine Arts	17	7%
Foreign Language	11	4%
Physical Education	10	4%
Other 52		21%

The survey results show that 34.3% of the male teachers are in the high school settings, more being teachers of math and history and social studies. Female teachers are more evenly dispersed throughout the grade levels, and taking more high school roles in the Language Arts and the

category of other. The category of other is professionals, such as school nurses, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.

Table 14 indicates that there are more teachers in secondary settings, grade levels 6 – 12, with advanced degrees. Further, teachers within the secondary schools with the most education are teachers of science and language arts.

District superintendents in two of the four participating school districts identify a teacher who they believe is a continuous learner to participate in a face-to-face interview. In the remaining two districts, one superintendent was unable to locate a willing teacher to participate, and the second superintendent did not name a teacher for the interview. To ensure that those districts are represented, teachers from areas of like demographics substitute for the school districts. To be consistent, the superintendents from the demographically-like districts identify the continuous learners. The four teachers that were interviewed share some of the characteristics of the teachers participating in the survey. Two are in the middle of their careers with approximately 15 years of teaching, while the others approach the end of their careers with 34 or more years of experience. All levels of public schooling are represented in the interviews with one elementary teacher, one middle school teacher, one high school teacher, and one teacher who delivers instruction to students in grades four through twelve music. All of the educators had multiple certifications, degrees, and roles. For example, the high school AP English teacher acts as Department Chair and works part-time for the College Board as a Consultant, as a Trainer of Teachers, and as a Mentor of Trainers. One teacher is currently a fifth grade teacher, and there is one middle school special education teacher. All of the teachers who participated in the interviews were women.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the teachers have been assigned pseudo names to assist the reader with the interview responses. The names and positions follow:
- Margaret: English
- Cecelia: Music
- Andie: Special Education
- Ayn: Elementary

Table 14

Grade Levels and Departments with Level of Education

	Total							
		Bachelor's	Bach & 15	Bach & 24	Master's	Master's & 15	Master's & 30	Doctoral
	251	20	24	39	83	24	57	4
Grades Kindergarten through 2	47	2	2	9	17	5	11	1
	18.70%	10.00%	8.30%	23.10%	20.50%	20.80%	19.30%	25.00%
Grades 3 – 5	54	4	2	11	18	7	12	0
	21.50%	20.00%	8.30%	28.20%	21.70%	29.20%	21.10%	0.00%
Grades 6 – 8	49	7	7	3	14	8	9	1
	19.50%	35.00%	29.20%	7.70%	16.90%	33.30%	15.80%	25.00%
Grades 9 – 12	62	3	7	10	18	4	19	1
	24.70%	15.00%	29.20%	25.60%	21.70%	16.70%	33.30%	25.00%
Math	17	2	5	3	4	0	2	1
	6.80%	10.00%	20.80%	7.70%	4.80%	0.00%	3.50%	25.00%
Business	4	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
	1.60%	5.00%	4.20%	0.00%	1.20%	0.00%	1.80%	0.00%
Science	19	0	5	1	6	2	5	0
	7.60%	0.00%	20.80%	2.60%	7.20%	8.30%	8.80%	0.00%
History/Social Studies	13	2	1	2	4	0	4	0
	5.20%	10.00%	4.20%	5.10%	4.80%	0.00%	7.00%	0.00%
Language Arts	20	2	0	1	7	4	5	1
	8.00%	10.00%	0.00%	2.60%	8.40%	16.70%	8.80%	25.00%
Fine Arts	17	1	1	6	5	1	3	0
	6.80%	5.00%	4.20%	15.40%	6.00%	4.20%	5.30%	0.00%
Foreign Language	11	1	1	2	4	1	2	0
	4.40%	5.00%	4.20%	5.10%	4.80%	4.20%	3.50%	0.00%
Physical Education	10	1	1	1	3	1	3	0
	4.00%	5.00%	4.20%	2.60%	3.60%	4.20%	5.30%	0.00%
Other	52	3	7	5	18	6	13	0
	20.70%	15.00%	29.20%	12.80%	21.70%	25.00%	22.80%	0.00%

In what grade level or departments do you teach? / *What is your highest level of education?*

Objectives

Through teacher surveys and interviews, this study evaluates facilitators and barriers to educators' participation in learning opportunities and assists in identifying quality professional

development characteristics. This report will (1) discuss the characteristics that teachers believe are quality attributes of professional development; (2) discuss the possible facilitators and barriers, based on teachers' perceptions, to educators acquiring the skills and engaging in the activities that characterize quality professional development; and (3) identify a general approach to addressing the delivery of quality professional development.

Limitations

Although every effort is made to minimize error, several limitations are known. The sample is limited to four school districts within two states. It is the optimistic view of the researcher that a larger study would yield similar results. The sample is also limited to public school teachers. By including private school teachers, cyber school instructors, alternative school teachers, administrators, professors, and preschool teachers, the researcher may have found different results.

The study lends itself to the error of measurement due to the portion of the teachers who refuse to take part in the survey. Although an incentive was offered to increase the possibility of respondents, only seventeen participants attempted to win the incentive. A large portion, 86%, of the invited teachers did not respond to the survey, and therefore the perspectives of these teachers are not counted. Those who decline to take part in the survey may have different perspectives than those who do cooperate. By increasing the sample size, the study still may not yield different results since the same factions of school professionals may not respond. Another proportion may yield biased results due to the process used to deploy the survey; by asking superintendents to deploy the invitation to participate in the survey, some of the respondents, though educational professionals, are not teachers. Examples of these professionals are school nurses, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists. Keeping these possible limitations in mind, the comparative selective characteristics in the sample gives an accurate representation of the population, which it is supposed to represent.

Further, certain questions in the survey prompt a socially desirable answer from the specific population, teachers. For example, it is socially expected that a teacher have a positive response

to statements like, "I consider myself a continuous learner within the field of teaching," and "I have a personal desire to learn more about teaching." These statement types can reflect the belief of the profession as a whole and still have no connection to the behaviors of the teachers. Holding the belief, however, does not predict the behaviors, thus the responses to behavioral statements will compare the validity of the attitude statements. An example of a behavioral statement is, "I typically earn more professional development hours than are needed for maintaining certification," The reliability of the measures is checked by rewording similar statements and repeating them. For example, the negative statement, "I only participate in professional development opportunities because they are a requirement to maintain professional certification," can be compared the positive statement, "I typically earn more professional development hours than are needed for maintaining certification." The response 'neutral' may also skew a behavioral statement. For example, see Figure 2 for the high percentage of neutral responses by males and females.

In order to keep respondents confidential, the sources of the survey respondents cannot be viewed; therefore there may be potential biases. Possible biases in the study include more responses from a particular demographic area, as the four contributing districts are from four different types of locale: city, town, large suburb, and rural. For example, survey question number 30 reveals that sixty-three (63) percent of the respondents strongly disagree or disagree that the school where the teacher works has a high level of free and reduced lunch rates. District demographics inform the readers of this study that federal support varies in the following ways:

- Percent of federal support in the suburb district equals one (1) percent.
- Percent of federal support in the rural district equals five (5) percent.
- Percent of federal support in the city district equals nine (9) percent.
- Percent of federal support in the town district equals thirteen (13) percent.

The results of question number 30 may lead the reader to believe that most of the participants are from the districts representing the suburb and rural areas.
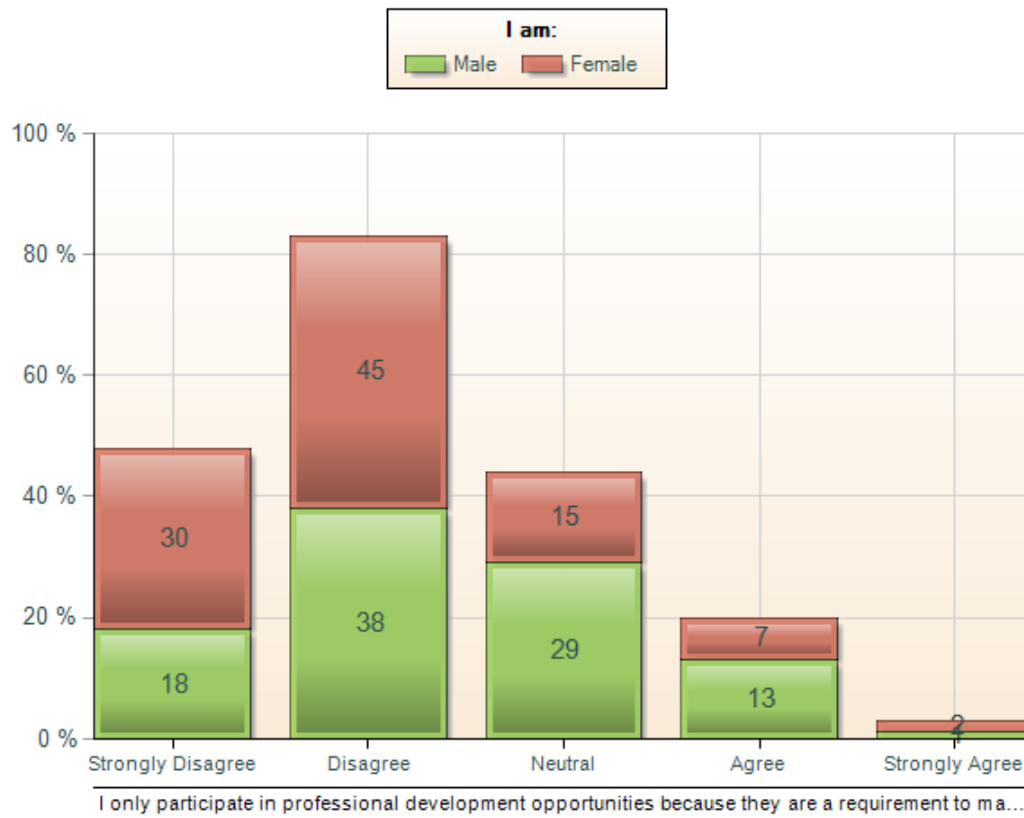
Figure 2. Professional Development Requirements and Neutral Responses

Data Collection

Quantitative data is collected in this study through the use of a survey. The varying perspectives and experiences of the participants are categorized into predetermined response groupings to which numbers are assigned. The advantage to using the survey is the likelihood of measuring the reactions of many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation and disaggregation of the data. This adds a broad, generalizable set of findings to the study.

The population size is 1,802 and the sample of the population is 252. Therefore the confidence interval for the sample size is 5.74 with a confidence level of 94.26%.

Qualitative data is used in this study in the form of interviews in order to understand what the participants (who represent continuous learners) value and to comprehend the meanings that they attach to experiences, from personal and cultural perspectives. Patton (2002) maintains that qualitative methods help to answer concrete questions, support development, and improve programs. Since the teachers interviewed are considered to attain well beyond minimum levels of professional development, according to their superintendents, quality enhancement, which focuses on excellence, is explored. Qualitative descriptions are necessary to capture the unique contrasts that emerge between the identified continuous learners and the other participants in the study. The data is collected without predetermined categories of analysis, contributing to the depth and detail of the inquiry.

The researcher explores the following questions with the survey and interview questions:

- Can the improved practice of providing quality professional development opportunities provide teachers with the opportunities to participate in learning activities?
- What facilitators enhance teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?
- What barriers limit teachers' abilities to participate in professional development opportunities?

The following categories are used to group survey and interview questions into themes for purposes of analysis of the three study questions. The information is meant to lead to understanding teacher perspectives for each area:

- Attributes of Continuous Learner;
- Facilitators;
- Negative Attributes of Continuous Learner;
- Barriers; and
- Characteristics of Professional Development.

A comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the perspectives of teachers on the subject of professional development requires both the numbers and the stories, or both quantitative and

qualitative data. Albert Einstein (1879 – 1955) stated, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted" (The Quotations Page).

Statistical Analysis

The tables below present the raw data from the survey reported in percentages. The tables represent the following categories and can be found in the Appendixes.

- Attributes of Continuous Learner (Appendix I);
- Facilitators (Appendix J);
- Negative Attributes of Continuous Learner (Appendix K);
- Barriers (Appendix L); and
- Characteristics of Professional Development (Appendix M).

Attributes of Continuous Learner

According to the responses to questions that pertain to Attributes of a Continuous Learner (Appendix I), the data clearly reports that high percentages of teachers view themselves as continuous learners. The responses follow in ascending order of positive responses (agree or strongly agree):

97%   I consider myself a continuous learner within the field of teaching.

94%   I have a personal desire to learn more about teaching.

90%   I am able to identify goals in my pursuit of learning.

85%   I am a self-initiator.

82%   I typically earn more professional development hours than are needed for maintaining certification.

82%   I am successful in achieving my lifelong learning goals.

Figure 3 shows that a higher percentage of females are confident in identifying goals. Teachers holding a Master's Degree or higher reportedly earn more professional development hours than are needed for maintaining certification. Please see Figure 4, reported in percentages.
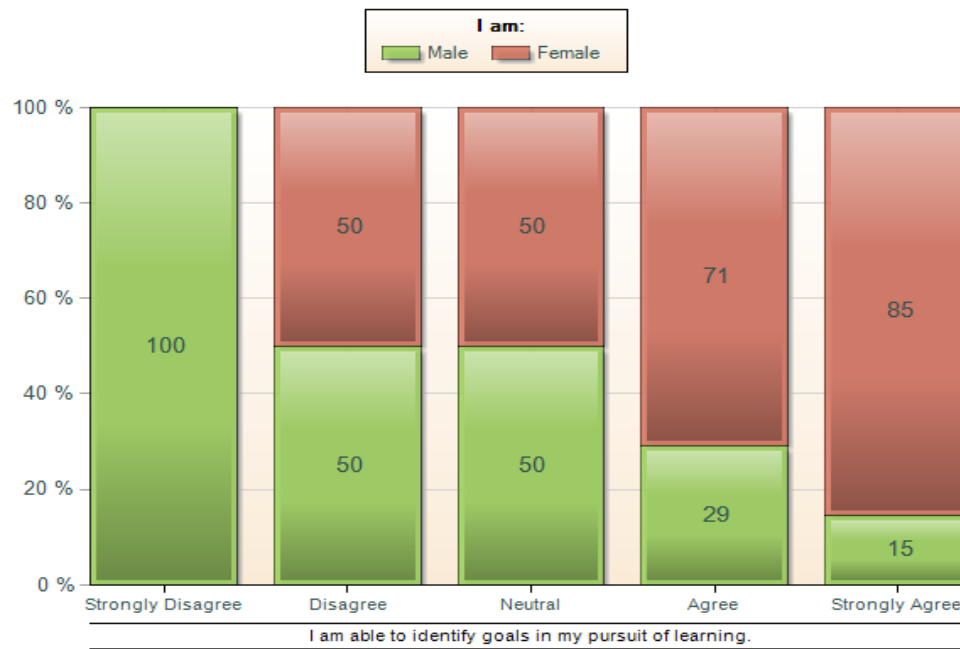
Figure 3. Identifying Goals
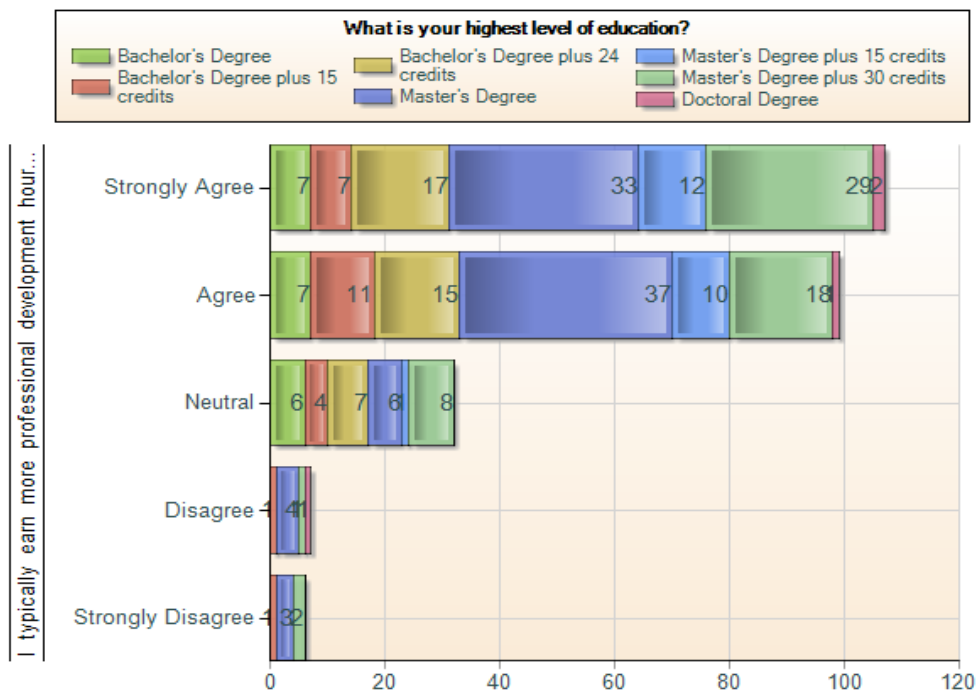
Figure 4. Required Hours and Level of Education

According to overall results (found in Appendix I), questions 38 and 39, dealing with
professional reading and attending conferences, appear to have less impact. Question 43,
regarding participation in research or a pilot study, shows little importance. Although, of the 55
respondents with Master's Degrees plus 30 credits, 27 or 49% have participated in a research
project or pilot study within the last five years. Teachers with Doctoral Degrees report an even
higher percentage, or 75%. These two levels of education report largely higher differences than
do teachers with other levels of education. Please see Figure 5.

When questioned during the interviews about what activities would lead their superiors to
believe that they were continuous learners, the interviewed teachers have several common
dialogues. For example, several shared that they act as teacher trainers and attend numerous
workshops, trainings, or conferences. Every one of the teachers mentions taking classes for
additional certifications and degrees.
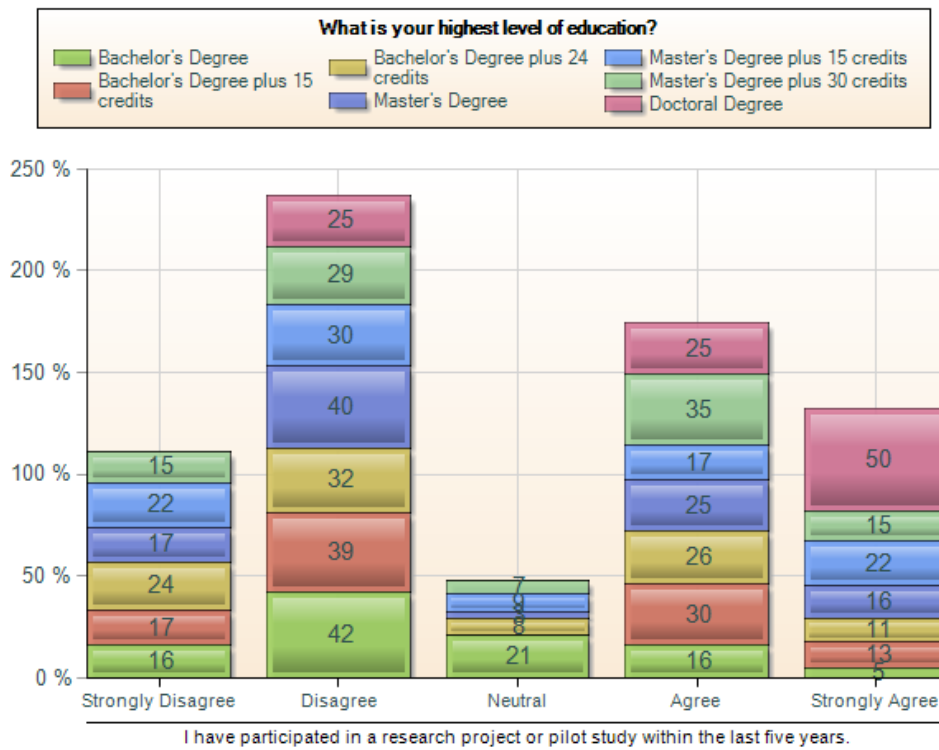
Figure 5. Research Participation and Level of Education

Discussions about when these interviewed teachers first realized that they are continuous learners are interesting. Three of the teachers cannot remember a specific incident and cannot remember a time when active learning was not a way of life. "I think I've always known that," is one comment.

Three of the four learners mention family influences from their childhoods. Andie shares a story about her grandfather coming to the country, along with his family, as an immigrant with no knowledge of the English language. She elaborates about how hard work is the method her ancestors used to reach the American dream. Instead, her grandfather instilled the value of education in his descendents. Education, he thought, is a better way to achieve the American dream.

Another memory took place about the time of the Vietnam War. One of six children, Margaret remembers telling her father that she wished to attend graduate school. She states that it must have broken her dad's heart to say, "I can't help you financially." During the wartime, many males were applying for scholarships and financial aid, as they were getting out of the service, so chances of a woman getting a fellowship or something were slim. She recalls that later, when she was married and had children, her husband attended graduate school while she cared for the children, "because that was the thing to do." Margaret returned to college in her forties. Similarly, Cecelia states that she comes from a family that values achievement in general, not necessarily attainment of degrees, occupation, or status, just to always be the best at what you do.

Margaret shares other insights stating that the more she studies, the better teacher she is. Having less time is not a factor in improving instruction. Being current and applying new information in the classroom, or being an active learner, makes a better teacher. Understanding the frustrations of the students is also easier when a teacher is a student. She recalls that even when she was extremely busy from attending classes, Margaret felt that the new knowledge she was accruing was helping her to become a better instructor. She always found a way to apply what she was learning to her classroom.

The interviewees talk of particular interests for trainings as being technology, reading strategies, music, arts, history, literature, leadership, and poetry. The topic of a workshop that sparks interest for Margaret deals with using poetry for argument, taking a fictional, creative type of writing to do what is ordinarily done with speeches or essays. For Margaret, the workshop offers a different way of looking at something in her content area. Another teacher, Andie, had to explain to her parents why her transcripts included Art History, French Literature, and other literature courses that were not requirements for her major of Special Education. She adds that when she travels or visits museums and the like, she likes to know what she is looking for and interpret what she sees, even offering explanations to her husband and children.

The music teacher, Cecelia, revealed that she enjoys leadership workshops and had the opportunity to attend a workshop based on *The One Minute Manager* delivered by the Dean of the Music School at Duquesne University. The workshop helps with self-empowerment and making informed decisions, not necessarily emotional decisions, as she shares, "...artistic types can be." The fifth grade teacher, Ayn, is currently interested in learning more about nutrition.

Margaret talks about teaching Sunday school several months a year, working with people, who are in their 80's and 90's. She states, "I think it's awesome because they're ready to learn even at that age." She admits that she is not a Biblical scholar and has to study a great deal to teach the class. Surprisingly, material that she recently studied had been authored by one of her former students. Margaret excitedly wrote him to reveal to him that he had become a teacher for his teacher. She shares her new knowledge through teaching. She phrases the love of teaching and learning well by saying, "That's what I do with things I learn. You gotta tell somebody."

When I questioned the continuous learners about what they think is their main purpose for participating in learning activities, I received four very different answers. Ayn wants to be the best teacher that she can be in her field of study. Margaret speaks of training teachers, wanting them to know that they can change students' lives. She thinks that there is a readiness that comes from being a teacher, and one does not have it before being in the classroom. Once in the classroom, a teacher, as a learner, can see what the expectation is and what the challenges are, a readiness for learning. In reference to her students, the teacher's main purpose for learning is the

love for literature and the value of the spoken and the written word. Margaret states, "They're such powerful things, and I want my students to know it."

When Cecelia learns, she hopes to walk away with a "recharged battery." She shares that after 34 years, basic things are always basic. Seeing a new perspective is something Cecelia looks forward to in a learning experience. Although her comments are quite interesting, the Andie apologizes for sounding corny, remembering something from an undergraduate level psychology course. She elaborates on self-actualization and how becoming a whole person is really important to her. She talks of having interests that have nothing to do with her career, yet she wants to know about such things. Andie also speaks of wanting to sound intelligent in conversations, conversations that occur in restaurants with strangers or in first acquaintance introductions. Knowing lots of different things allow connections with many different people. She believes that in the information society, there is no excuse for ignorance.

When the continuous learners assess strengths and weaknesses in planning for learning needs, they often look to the students. How well students are progressing in a particular subject is feedback for how well the subject has been taught. Andie mentions that sometimes her long – term goals do not have short-term applications. In other words, she does not want to be a principal, but she will receive principal certification as she works toward the degree that she really desires. Lastly, Cecelia elaborates on strengthening the left side of her brain through the hands-on processes in the arts.

Facilitators to Learning

Appendix J demonstrates the teachers' perceptions to facilitators of participation in professional development opportunities. The more noteworthy responses, regarding facilitators to participating in professional development, come from question numbers 10, 11, 22, 29, 35, and 39. Teachers reportedly agree or strongly agree over 65% of the time to the following statements, which are ranked in order of positive response from highest to lowest:

86%   Learning opportunities give me the chance to meet/ network/ exchange ideas with others in my profession.

81%   I have gained professional skills through participation in a conference within the last five years.

77%   I have strong information seeking skills.

74%   Learning provides relaxation and enjoyment as a change of pace from the routine.

69%   I find access to learning opportunities easily.

65%   I am encouraged by family members to continue to learn.

Question number 50 is an open-ended question that allows respondents to comment on major influences for participation in professional development. The survey yields 138 open-ended responses. The following categories are listed in order of importance from most to least number of responses.

- Love of learning (30);
- Application to classroom and student achievement (29);
- Learning from others (22);
- Desire to learn new or current information (12);
- Technology Changes (10);
- Requirement (9);
- Encouragement from Employer (7);
- Encouragement from Family (2);
- Interesting Topics (2); and
- Educational Reform (2).

Several of the comments deal with a love of learning, such as "Enjoy it," "Self-motivation," and "Desire for self –improvement." During one of the interviews, Margaret mentions the AHA of discovery as a facilitator. Several of the interviewed teachers mention a need for personal challenges and changes; these teachers are not complacent learners.

Almost as many, voice application to the classroom and student achievement as facilitators in the open-ended response. A music teacher responds that the major facilitator has been, "The Orff-Schulwerk philosophy of music education has been my major influence." Others mention student

achievement. For example, one teacher writes, "New information in my field of special education," while another notes, "Wanting to better my teaching, to reach all students." Similarly, another teacher adds, "The desire to learn more about a topic which in turn helps me to be a better teacher."

Another common facilitator of learning mentioned in the open-ended response is learning from peers. Some responses are, "Learning from others," Working with other professionals," "Networking with others," and "Being able to share with the classroom teacher." Other open-ended responses include specific complaints about lack of support from district leadership, or respondents mention specific favorable programs, like National Board Certification, Cathy Feldman's Literacy Workshops, Harry Wong, and Madeline Hunter.

From the teacher interviews, specific people, people who believe in them, are terrific facilitators. Other teachers, including elementary teachers "who make you feel really good about who you are," and especially college professors who give specific feedback, are facilitators of these continuous learners. Andie, sharing during the interview, said that she attended many classes, in which she earned an A, but she did not know why, recalling, the professors that are most influential are the ones that offer specific feedback. Mostly, female professors influenced Andie, aspiring to teach college some day. A simple nudge from a professor, "So, when are you starting on the doctorate?" inspired Margaret to acquire that goal. Peer teachers or colleagues and family members are also noted as supports. Margaret recalled that her daughter would leave notes on the bathroom mirror, which read, "Come on, Mom. You can do it." A veteran teacher, Cecelia, names students as her facilitator. She learns much from her students, calling it a "constant new lesson every day."

Similar to the open-ended responses, two motivators are common to the four teachers who were interviewed. One frequent response is interest and practical application to the classroom and to life. The interviewed teachers express interest for more in depth learning in specifically, reading strategies, poetry, and music. The music teacher, Cecelia, explains that with music, "you can never learn it all; you probably can never even hear it all. There is such a wealth of resources." The second common response is student achievement. Body language and increase in voice

58

inflection are indicators from all four interviews that student achievement is a great motivator for increased learning. As these otherwise reserved teachers talk of student successes, speech becomes louder, smiles emerge, and a fist raises and lowers with a cheerful, "Yes!" The English teacher recalls a lesson in voice, where she found the best thing to do, Margaret remembers, "was eliminate me," forcing the students to talk on audio tape about literature. While listening to the tape in the car on the way home, Margaret recalls that the student said, "The teacher thinks that it might mean such and such, but I really think…" Margaret remembers her own reaction and notes that the people in the car next to her were probably wondering what she was doing, but the moment of knowing that those students were learning independently, she says, "was awesome." This teacher expresses a desire to continue to learn ways to engage students.

Two of the consulted teachers have young children at home and talk of setting good examples for their children as continuous learners. Andie specifically wants to set an example for her daughter inspiring her to consider careers in leadership positions.

Question number 20 (Appendix J) signifies that 59% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that making time for learning opportunities is easy. Therefore, time is considered to be a barrier to participating in professional development.

Questions 15, 16, 21, and 22 (Appendix J) have less significant ratings implying that teachers view the following with a reduced amount of importance: distance, location, career advancement, and increased recognition. However, according to Figure 6, location is perceived as more of a facilitator to females than to males.

Teachers' perspectives vary in several areas according to the number of years of teaching experience. For example, teachers with fewer than ten years of teaching experience have higher aspirations for career advancement with potential for financial reward through learning opportunities. Teachers with more than ten years disagree. Please see Figure 7. The Figure shows that 86 of the 249 respondents agree that there is career advancement with potential for financial reward through learning opportunities. However, 47 of those who agree have fewer than ten years of experience.
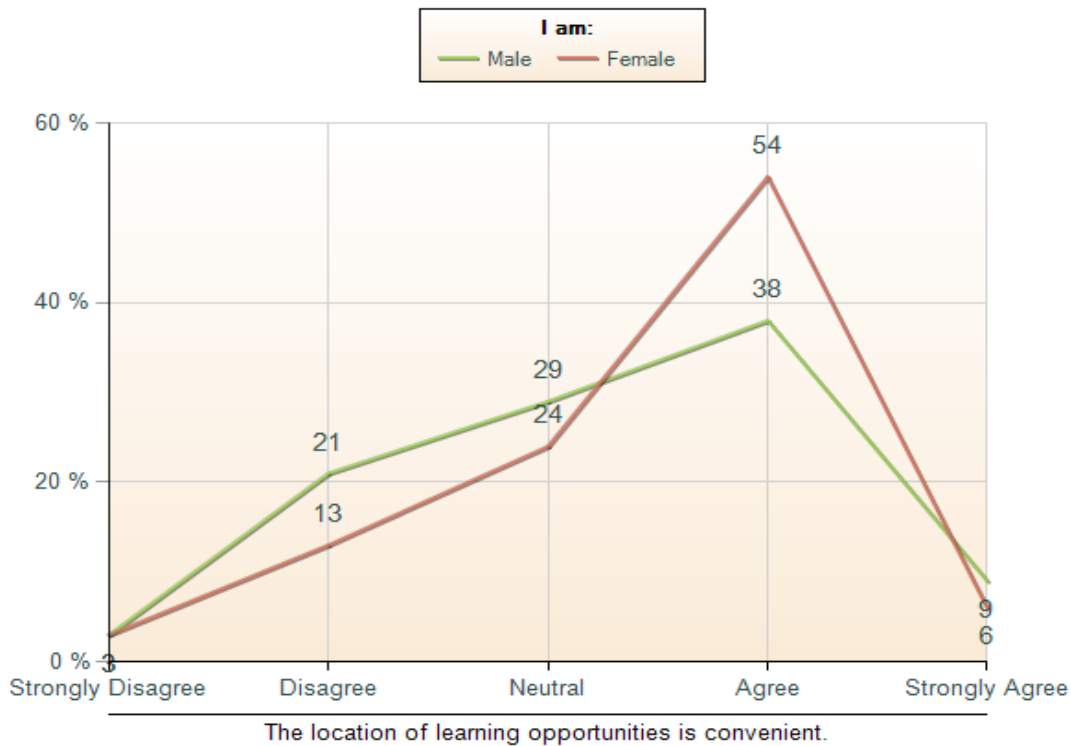
Figure 6. Location and Gender

Questions 27, 28, and 48 (Appendix J) lie mainly in the middle of the Likert scale, with most responses fairly evenly distributed in the categories of agree, neutral or disagree. These questions deal with learning styles, affordability, and choices. Although the ratings present these topics as less significant, many of these are voiced as important in the open-ended responses and in the interviews, which are discussed further. Affordability and choice of programming are mentioned more as barriers, and therefore are discussed further in that section.

Males and females feel differently about certain facilitators. For example, Figure 8 shows that females view learning opportunities as a better match to their learning styles than do males.
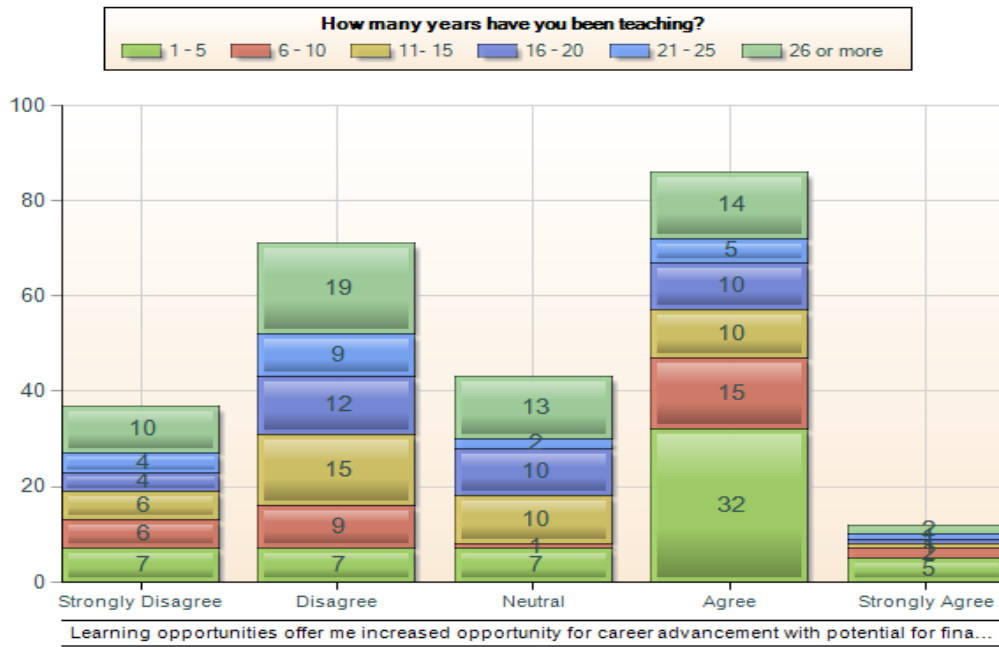
Figure 7. Beliefs in Career Advancement and Years of Teaching
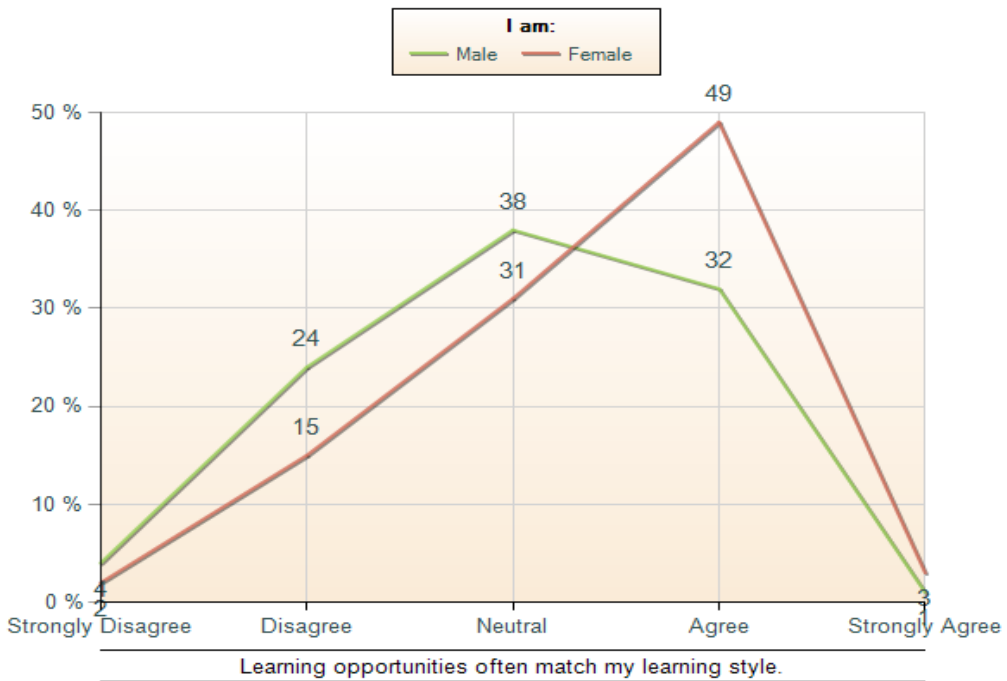
Figure 8. Learning Styles and Gender

61

Negative Attributes of Continuous Learners

Most responses for the category of Negative Attributes of Continuous Learners (Appendix K) are strongly disagree or disagree, which indicates that teachers participating in the survey value professional development and learning. The responses are listed here.

86%   Continuation of learning is a low personal priority for me.

70%   I only participate in professional development opportunities because they are a requirement to maintain professional certification.

64%   I am burnt out from participating in professional development.

Question number 17 (Appendix K) specifically refers to Beck and Cowan's *Spiral Dynamics* (2006), discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. Responses under the grouping entitled, "Sharing," demonstrate characteristics of the Green Meme, which stresses collegiality and collaboration with peers. "Fit Who I Am, Free Access" responses would be characterized as Yellow, the Meme that relies on individual choice and freedom. Most responses fall into these two categories. Further, males and females describe their learning styles in different ways. Please see Table 15. It is noteworthy that, once again, females rate highly the learning style dealing with collaborations with peers. Females report higher needs to be told how to do things the right way. Finally, the scale, based on the memes, show that males respond higher on the scale than do females.

Table 15

Learning Style Descriptions and Gender

	I would describe my learning style in the following way:		
	Total	I am:	
		Male	Female
	241	67	174
I need dominated by strong leadership that gives rewards.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
I work best when told how to do things the right way	14.10%	6.00%	17.20%
I am motivated by the achievement of material rewards 2.90%		7.50%	1.10%
I want to get along and feel accepted by peers; sharing and participating are better than competing.	25.70%	16.40%	29.30%
I enjoy doing things that fit who I am; I need free access to information and materials.	44.00%	55.20%	39.70%
My work must be meaningful to the overall health of life.	13.30%	14.90%	12.60%

Barriers to Learning

The survey results reveal several common barriers to learning; time, money, family obligations, and lack of choice in professional development opportunities are resounding barriers. Appendix L gives information about what teachers perceive to be barriers to learning. The most pertinent responses, regarding barriers to participating in professional development, come from question numbers 19, 24, and 25. Teachers reportedly agree or strongly agree over 55% of the time to the following statements, which are ranked in order of positive response from highest to lowest:

61%   Financial obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.

58%   The outside demands of the classroom (such as correcting papers) keep me from participating in more learning opportunities.

55%   Family obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.

As previously noted, question number 20, listed with facilitators in Appendix J, signifies that 59% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that making time for learning opportunities is easy. Therefore, time is considered to be a barrier to participating in professional development.

Question 49 yields 169 open-ended responses regarding barriers to professional development. The following categories are listed in order of calculation from most common major barrier to least frequent barrier.

- Time (71);
- Financial obstacles (54);
- Family obligations (22);
- Topics offered are not applicable to position held (19);
- Demands of the classroom (13);
- Lack of employer support (6);
- Lack of choice of topic (4);
- Undesirable location (3);
- Negative past experience (2); and
- Lack of information to find opportunity (1).

Time, finances, family obligations, and non-applicable topics are the categories most often mentioned as barriers. Demands of the classroom and family obligations may also be considered extensions of the barrier of time.

Many experience time as a barrier to learning occasions, though females view it as more of a hurdle than males. Figure 9 shows that 50% of females disagree and 39% of males disagree that making time for professional development is easy.

The outside demands of the classroom are also a constraint of time. Cross-tabulated with years of service, the results show that 73.8% of teachers with a range of 11 – 15 years of service agree and strongly agree that the burden of classroom tasks is a barrier to learning. Other ranges of years of service report lower percentages. Please see Figure 10.
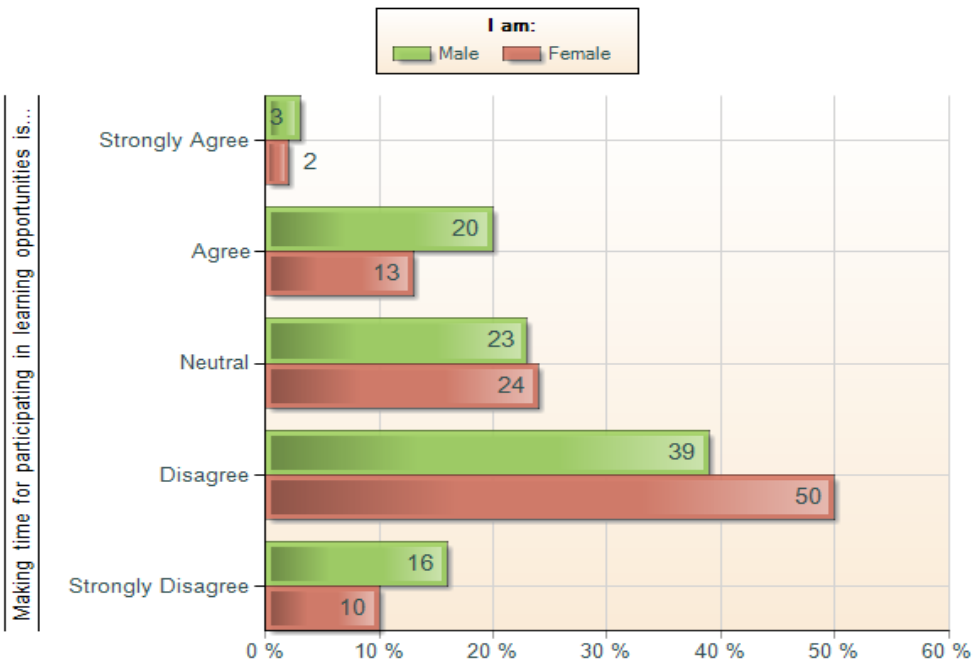
Figure 9. Time and Gender
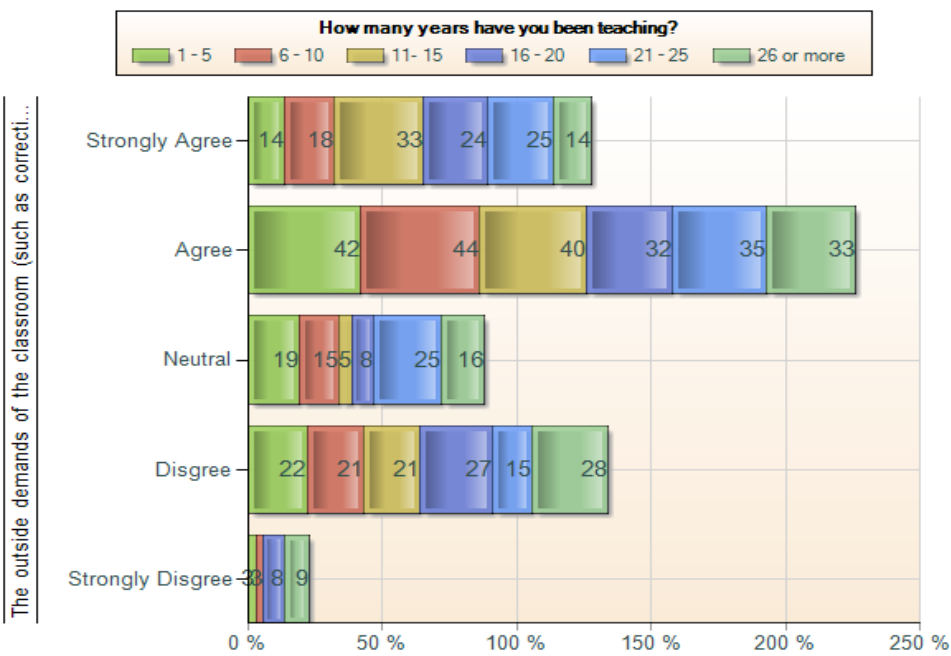
Figure 10. Outside Demands of the Classroom and Years of Teaching

65

Time is one of the most prominent barriers from the survey respondents. This is illustrated beautifully as Margaret is interviewing from her own home on a Sunday afternoon and states, "I've got eight sets of quizzes still sitting there waiting to be graded, after grading four sets of essays yesterday. All those things that you have as a teacher, unlike a lot of other professions, do not leave time for other things."

Financial obligations most severely impact the teachers with a range of 6 – 10 years of experience with 29.4% who agree and 52.9% who strongly agree that finances act as a barrier to accrue professional development. Teachers, with a range of five years experience or less, also struggle with financial obligations, with 40.7% who agree and 27.3% who strongly agree. Please see Figure 11.
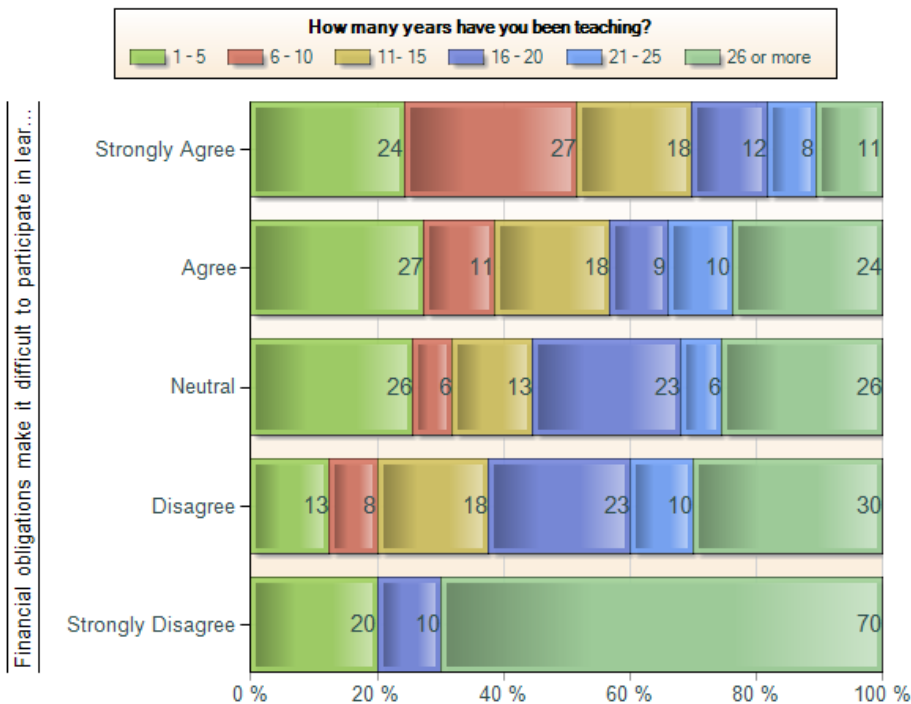
Figure 11. Financial Obligations and Years of Teaching

Responses from another statement on the survey regarding affordability of learning opportunities concur with Figure 11. Figure 12 clearly shows the relationship between financial barriers and years of teaching experience. Many beginning teachers do not agree that learning opportunities are affordable.

Financial obligations occur more frequently for teachers with less than a Master's Degree. Table 16 shows the ratings of teachers according to levels of education who agree or strongly agree that financial obligations are a barrier to learning opportunities.
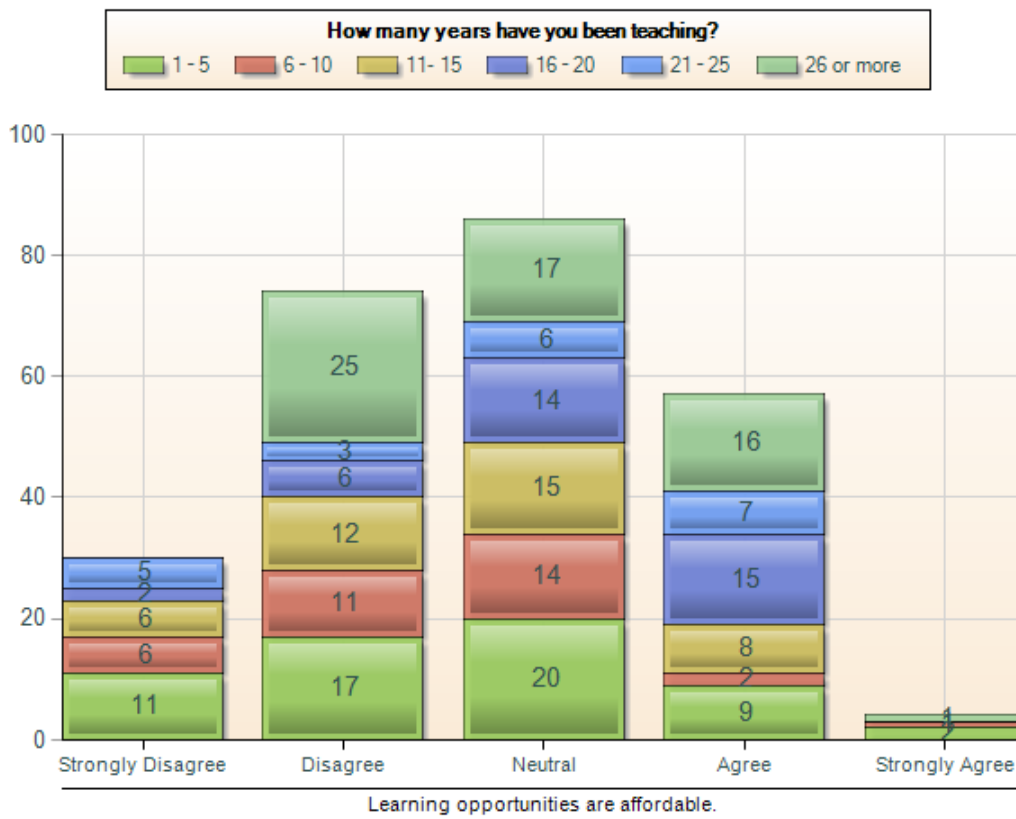
Figure 12. Financial Responsibilities and Years of Teaching

Table 16

Financial Obligations and Level of Education

Agree and Strongly Agree	Percentages:
Bachelor's Degree	75%
Bachelor's Degree plus 15 credits	79.2%
Bachelor's Degree plus 24 credits	71.8%
Master's Degree	56.6%
Master's Degree plus 15 credits	54.2%
Master's Degree plus 30 credits	55.2%
Doctoral Degree	0%

More males than females report that financial obligations are a barrier to learning. Please see Table 17.

Table 17

Financial Obligations & Gender

Financial obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.		
Males		Females
Percentage Agree & Strongly Agree	71.4 57.4	

Interviewed teachers concur with the survey respondents that finances are often barriers. Margaret discovered that there are many opportunities for financial support and shares that information with teachers when appropriate. She also notes tips, such as cooking a little less expensively and spending a little less money on other things, that allows money for classes and books.

Family obligations largely impact all experience levels with added emphasis on years 6 – 15 of teaching. Specifically, of teachers with 6 – 10 years of experience, 54.5% agree and 24.2% strongly agree that family obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities. In addition, of teachers with 11 – 15 years of experience, 23.8% agree and 50% of teachers strongly agree with the statement. Please see Figure 13.

Family obligations and level of education also show a relationship, as teachers with a Bachelor's Degree plus 15 credits, Bachelor's Degree plus 30 credits, and Master's Degree have higher survey ratings regarding family obligations as a barrier. Please see Figure 14.
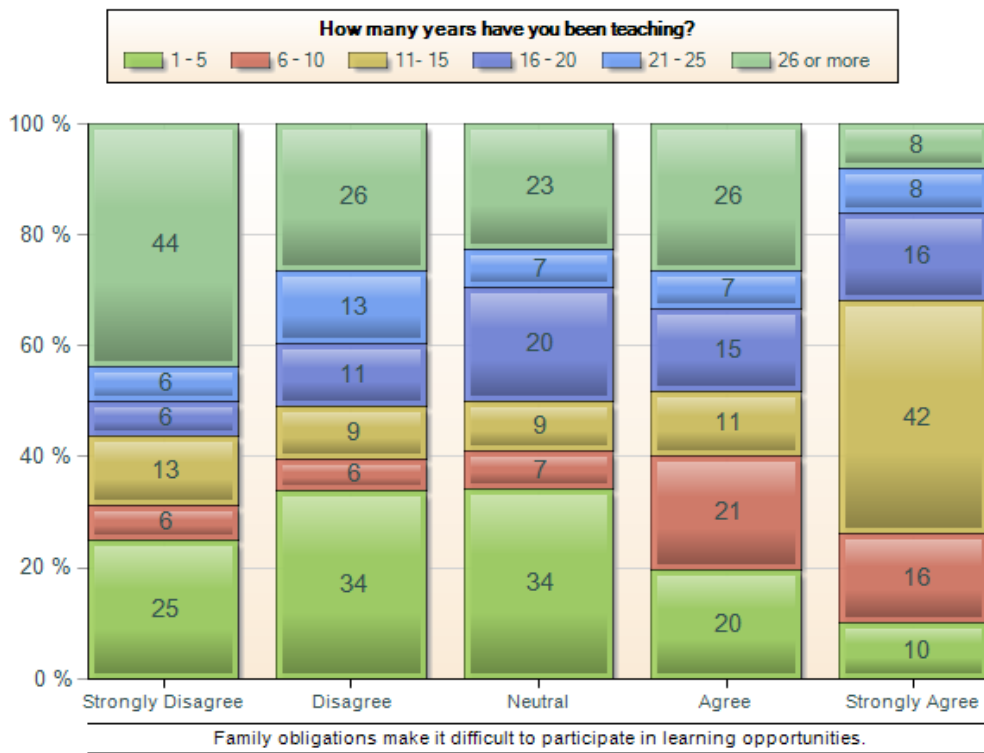
Figure 13. Family Obligations and Years of Teaching

Family obligations do not appear to have a relationship to gender in question 24 of the survey. However, open-ended responses as well as the interviews indicate that family obligations are largely female barriers. For example, one respondent to the open-ended response names family obligations as a barrier with this comment, "My husband is Active Duty in the Army. We live

eight hours away from each other, and I am raising our one year old son alone." Another teacher reports, "I'm not willing to leave my husband and toddler for long periods of time in order to participate in professional development."
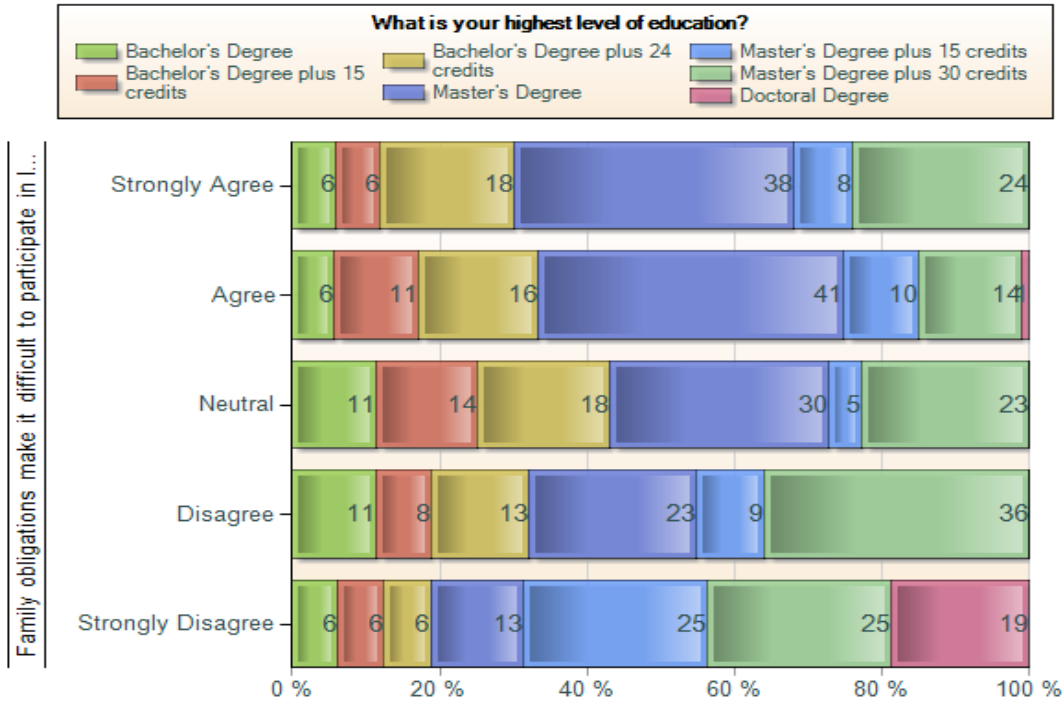
Figure 14. Family Obligations and Level of Education

Family obligations are other barriers that can, at least, delay an educational experience, according to one interviewed teacher. Andie deferred her enrollment in an administrative program due to having a small child at home. Ayn, also having small children, reports that she has a support system within her family to help with babysitting. Margaret tells of summer workshops that she facilitates, where children attend with their parents and are occupied with electronic games because, she states, "It is Mommy's turn to learn today." Some suggestions that the four continuous learners offer are online classes or courses that require minimal attendance requirements while fulfilling the course mandates through extension.

Lesser concerns for teachers appear to be job constraints and opportunity of career advancement (questions 13 and 33 of Appendix L). However, in Figure 15, males report more barriers from job constraints than do females.

Responses to three questions (numbers 12, 34, and 37 in Appendix L) signify that the possible barriers named in the survey do not necessarily create obstacles to learning. Teachers reportedly disagree or strongly disagree most of the time to the following statements, which are ranked in order of negative response (strongly disagree or disagree) from highest to lowest:

91%   I have a lack of computer access.

80%   My overall well-being limits me from participating in learning opportunities.

57%   I have had negative experiences with prior learning activities.
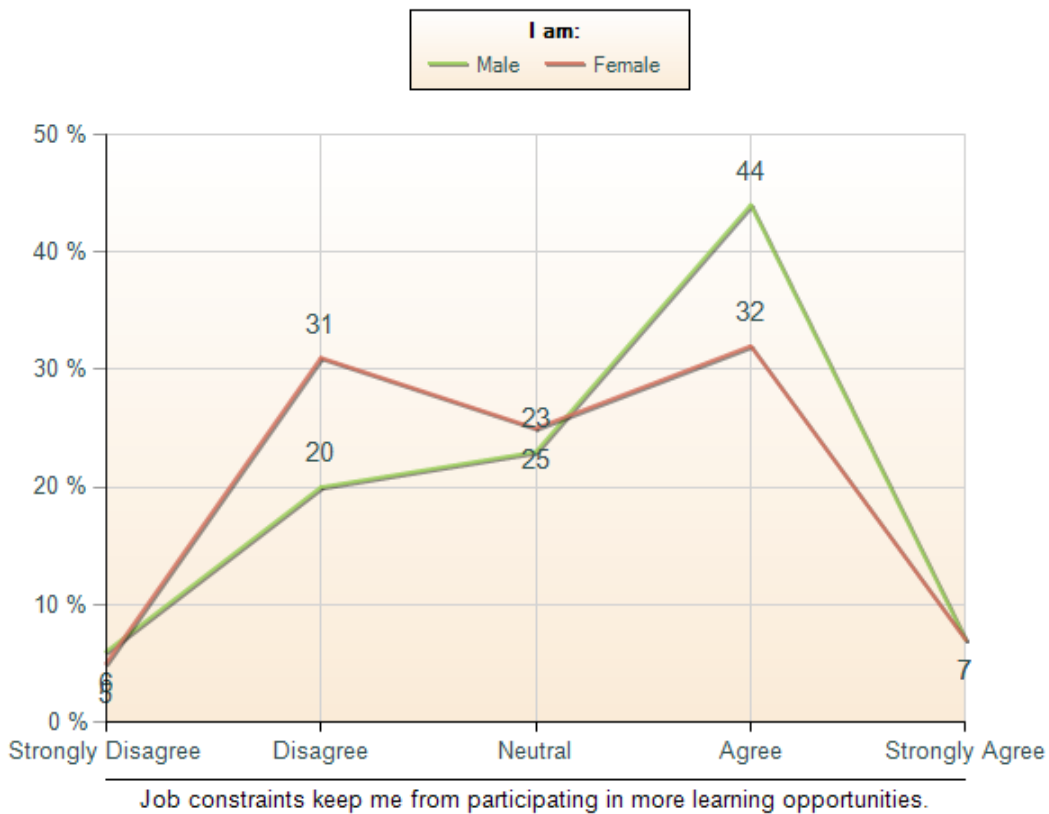
Figure 15. Job Constraints and Gender

One barrier, which needs considerable attention, is topics that are offered often do not have application to the teaching positions that are held. Teachers talk of not being offered choices in professional development and feel disrespected as professionals as a result. "They are not related to my subject area!!!" and "Professional development opportunities are mainly chosen for me and have little relevance to my needs," are comments written for the open-ended response questions. Similarly, one states, "I don't have many opportunities to go to the type of conferences that I'm interested in. There is too much professional development decided for me." Specific comments from physical education teachers, school nurses, counselors, and music and art teachers are written in the open-ended responses regarding this as a concern. One school nurse states, "Some of the teaching things I attend have nothing to do with my practice. It is difficult to find good in-services for school nursing unless offered by the state, just two times per year." A physical education teacher, who is serving in leadership positions in state and national levels, states, "…the board and the elementary director appear oblivious to my professional involvement to better serve the school system and Physical Educational community of educators that I represent." Another teacher writes, "Many disciplines are listed under the one title of 'fine arts.' Because of this, any fine arts development activities are an attempt to meet the needs of all of these disciplines leaving minimal time to get serious about our goals and initiatives."

Margaret thinks that too often districts have gone the convenient or the inexpensive route, and teachers have become hardened to think that professional development is not going to be a good thing, and so the teachers come to a presentation with a stack of papers to grade or knitting to do. The teachers don't allow themselves to think that the experience is going to be worthwhile. She adds that when in-services are not directly relevant to a content area or grade level that the attendees teach, they lack interest. Cecelia reveals that, "It is an asset to be able to adapt to what children need and find better ways for them to seek understanding."

Question number 18 (Appendix L) demonstrates a need for spending time during the school day on psychological or social problems. However, by cross tabulation of question number 18 with question number 5, which determines grade levels and departments, a deeper analysis can be perceived. The department of "Other" reports spending much larger amounts of time on psychological or social problems, registering thirty (30) responses beyond 25% of the school

Table 18.

Time Spent on Psychological or Social Problems

In what grade level or departments do you teach? And On average, what percentage of the school day do you spend on psychological or social problems?				
Total	Less than 25%	26 - 50%	51 - 75%	More than 75%
240 151		55	20	14
Gr K - 2 45	29	10	4	2
18.80% 19.20%		18.20%	20.00%	14.30%
Gr 3 – 5 49	33	11	3	2
20.40% 21.90%		20.00%	15.00%	14.30%
Gr 6 – 8 49	33	12	1	3
20.40% 21.90%		21.80%	5.00%	21.40%
Gr 9 – 12 60	35	15	7	3
25.00% 23.20%		27.30%	35.00%	21.40%
Math 17	14	2	1	0
7.10% 9.30%		3.60%	5.00%	0.00%
Business 4	2	2	0	0
1.70% 1.30%		3.60%	0.00%	0.00%
Science 18	17	1	0	0
7.50% 11.30%		1.80%	0.00%	0.00%
Hist/Soc St 13	6	5	2	0
5.40% 4.00%		9.10%	10.00%	0.00%
Lang Arts 19	13	4	2	0
7.90% 8.60%		7.30%	10.00%	0.00%
Fine Arts 16	8	5	3	0
6.70% 5.30%		9.10%	15.00%	0.00%
For Lang 11	10	1	0	0
4.60% 6.60%		1.80%	0.00%	0.00%
Phys Ed 9	8	1	0	0
3.80% 5.30%		1.80%	0.00%	0.00%
Other 51	21	11	9	10
21.30% 13.90%		20.00%	45.00%	71.40%

Characteristics of Professional Development

Appendix M shows Characteristics of Professional Development. Following are teachers' perceptions ranked in ascending order.

87%   I participate in learning opportunities to promote student achievement.

80%   I regularly collaborate with other teachers.

70%   I feel that professional development topics are decided for me.

68%   I have increased my learning as a result of working in a group.

66%   Working routinely in groups or teams provides me with experiences that are based on the reality of my daily teaching practice.

56%   Other people influence my learning.

Making an impact on student achievement appears to be the most significant motivator for participation in professional development opportunities. This is reinforced by comments to the open-ended responses and the reactions of the interviewed teachers, as noted previously. Four of the questions pertain to working with peers and the responses are positive. The statement, "I feel that professional development topics are decided for me," is more of a negative response to professional development participation; it is also discussed previously.

Social dimensions of learning are viewed as more important to females than to males according to Table 19. The table shows consistent differences to five different questions regarding collaborative learning and gender.

One group of teachers, with a range of 21 – 25 years in the present school or current building, consistently reports lower percentages of agreement to statements concerning collaboration and collegiality. However, teachers with the same range of years without the building restriction do not report lower percentages. Please see Table 20.

Table 19

Collaboration and Gender Differences

Working routinely in groups or teams provides me with experiences that are based on the reality of my daily teaching practice.		
	Males	Females
Percentage Agree & Disagree	56.9	69.8

Other people influence my learning.

	Males	Females
Percentage Agree & Disagree	47.7	59.5

I have increased my learning as a result of working in a group.

	Males	Females
Percentage Agree & Disagree	56.9	72.4

I regularly collaborate with other teachers.

	Males	Females
Percentage Agree & Disagree	74.2	83.1

Learning opportunities give me the chance to meet/network/exchange ideas with others in my profession.

	Males	Females
Percentage Agree & Disagree	79.7	87.9

Table 20

Collaboration and Years in Current Building versus Years of Teaching

	Total Percentages of Agree and Strongly Agree in Current Building	Agree and Strongly Agree in Current Building with 21 – 25 years	Total Percentages Agree and Strongly Agree with 21 – 25 years	Agree and Strongly Agree with 21 – 25 years
Learning opportunities give me the chance to meet/ network/ exchange ideas with others in my profession.	85.6	75	85.7	80.9
I regularly collaborate with other teachers.	81	58.3	80.7	73.7
Working routinely in groups or teams provides me with experiences that are based on the reality of my daily teaching practice.	66.5	45.5	66.3	52.6
Other people influence my learning.	56.1	36.4	56.3	52.7
I have increased my learning as a result of working in a group.	68.1	54.5	68.2	68.4

When comparing grade levels and departments with statements regarding collaboration and collegiality, there are no consistent patterns to report.

The survey closes with an opportunity for respondents to add comments. Sixty-three respond with valuable comments. Several professionals remark on little choice in their professional development and feel that their professional status is not respected when programming is regimented and dictated. Specific desires for future learning are named, such as online classes, visiting historical sites, conducting interviews, and attending presentations. People in particular positions, such as school nurses and counselors, voice a discontent for mandated professional development sessions that are not applicable to their situations. One insightful teacher observes

that requirements of No Child Left Behind (2001) limit opportunities to academic areas only, adding that school systems have become too focused on the immediate feedback of high stakes testing. The respondent elaborates more on the premise that the fine arts and physical education are the foundations of communication and mathematical skills. Further, "Too much time is spent focused on the end-product of symbolic language rather than recognizing the maturation differences and the essential milestone developmental stages children need to become critical thinkers at Piagetian levels of cognitive functions."

Also, teachers reiterate that time, money, and family obligations are the most highly rated barriers, and another complains of too many skills being taught to teachers simultaneously. For example, she names technology, data, testing, and interventions.

Through the remarks, teachers suggest opportunities to work more with their peers and sharing information learned from outside professional development opportunities through collaboration. One teacher comments, "I learn best while interacting in group settings. The conversations and discussions of topics stay with me longer than reading a text."

Final comments from the interviewed teachers demonstrate their passion for learning. Although three of the four teachers feel their school districts support their desires to continue to learn, one realized that her previous comments in the interview have little to do with her inspiration coming from her workplace. She added, "But I guess, I really don't need my workplace to inspire me to be a lifelong learner. I think there are some who do though." Margaret believes that professional development is the key to saving education. She reports one of her three Germany exchange students says that she is the closest teacher she had to what she had back home, someone with high expectations and who wanted things to be done. Margaret said we tend to be snobbish in the United States, thinking we are better about a lot of things, but we are not better about education. Teachers need to have a passion for learning, see a need for it, and work really hard to be successful. Margaret offers the following solution:

> "I'm looking at this from the end of a public school career. We have to
> convince teachers that they have to keep learning so that they can change what

happens in classrooms and not just keep doing what has been done for
centuries. It's just not good enough."

Several comments from the survey's open-ended response questions indicate that teaching and lifelong learning are synonymous, and one teacher simply wrote, "Look up ancora-imparo." I did, and it means, I am still learning.

Chapter Five
Conclusion

Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the quality of education through developing professionalism and capabilities of teachers. By reviewing the range of factors that are characterized as quality attributes of professional development, this study attempts to interpret the perceptions of teachers and provide understanding to their interpretations of their experiences with learning opportunities. This report will (1) summarize teachers' perceptions regarding professional development; (2) discuss the possible facilitators and barriers, based on teachers' perceptions, to educators acquiring the skills and engaging in the activities that characterize quality professional development; and (3) identify a general approach to addressing the delivery of quality professional development.

One of the enduring aspects of compulsory education is its ability to respond to waves of political pressures and societal demands. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requires that schools tighten accountability through increased testing of student achievement. In addition to the law, the nature of teaching demands that teachers engage in continuing career-long professional development. Teachers are understood to have ongoing professional needs that can be met through continuity and progression. Self-regulated learners grasp these opportunities as an ongoing pursuit for improved performance. By listening to teachers' voices, this researcher hopes to promote a deeper understanding of professional perspectives, which influence teachers to participate in learning opportunities or adversely, factors that hinder participation in learning. Through evaluation of teacher perspectives of facilitators and barriers to educators' participation in learning, this dissertation examines the relationship between school culture and professional development that attributes to continuous learning as well as the personal facilitators and barriers that affect teachers' learning.

Let me return to my literature review. Through a literature review and a pilot study, I identify in this paper quality characteristics of professional development. The professional development characteristics that are ranked with the highest importance are Collegiality, Collective

Participation, Common Purpose, Support, and Collaboration. From the information learned in the pilot study, onsite collegiality and evidence of student achievement are strong motivators for intensification of professional development.

In the literature review, I have used the terms lifelong learning and professional development interchangeably. Ideally, professional development will lead to lifelong learning, particularly in the field of education. Professional development seeks to enhance lifelong learning by instilling the love of learning in educators.

In my own experience, I can recall feeling stimulation and excitement over particular professional development topics, especially when applicable to the classroom. I am particularly interested in social dimensions of learning, so the subject of social and emotional intelligence with application to students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is one that predominantly inspired me. Learning a little about this topic encouraged me to further study the information on my own. The same is true of brain research as it applies to instructional strategies and systemic changes. Initial investigation into this topic grew into my conference presentations on the important subject.

Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Professional Development

According to the survey analysis used for this study, the data clearly reports that high percentages of teachers view themselves as continuous learners. Comparably, most teachers disagree or strongly disagree to the negative statements about continuous learners, again confirming that they view themselves as constant learners. Please see Appendices I and K. This coincides with the work of Snow-Renner & Lauer (2005), which supports that student achievement is positively correlated with the extent of teacher participation in quality professional development. Teacher professional development can improve student achievement when it focuses on teachers' knowledge of the subject matter and how students understand and learn it (Garet et al, 2001). Goals focusing on student learning should provide the direction for staff development efforts.

I feel that I am a continuous learner, or a lifelong learner. I optimistically want to believe that all teachers view themselves as continuous learners, and I am pleased that the results show a high response rate to a desire to continue to learn. However, as I study the results of the survey, I observe that there are teachers that have little or, unfortunately, no desire to continue to learn more about education. Have they entered a profession of which they are not fond? Have negative experiences with professional development activities created this feeling of conflict with learning? I can recall a recent conversation with a college student who stated that he was extremely anxious to graduate and be done. With further prompting, I learned that this student has a mild learning disability and has struggled with his learning since first grade. He stated that nearly every academic assignment has been a challenge for him. When teachers face continuing obstacles, do they lack the desire to continue to learn?

These negative responses cause me to wonder what critical incidents created this unrest with the aspiration for learning in these individuals. More important to the purposes of this study, are there ways of assisting or motivating these individuals so that they will want to participate in professional development opportunities?

Facilitators

Collaboration and collegiality are themes that the pilot study identifies as strong, quality characteristics of professional development. Collaboration and collegiality are also strongly supported by the research (Elmore, 2002; U.S. Department of Education Professional Development Team, 1994; Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005; Porter et. al. (2000); and Garet et. al. (1999) as superior elements of professional development. Studies (Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 1993; Louis & Marks, 1998) suggest that participating in professional learning communities optimizes the time spent on professional development.

Showers, Joyce, and Bennet (1987) concluded that if educators are to master and practice new strategies, then combinations of four teaching components and two support components are necessary in the delivery of professional development programs. The four teaching components are:

Theory (answers "why?" and focuses on educator knowledge).

Demonstration (opportunity to see a new practice applied).

Practice (25 trials using the skill are to ensure the skill is not lost).

Feedback (provided promptly by peers or "experts" who are trusted).

This study includes peer feedback as important to professional development; this concurs with the pilot study, which identifies peer feedback as one of the highest ranked qualities of professional development. Showers, Joyce, and Bennet (1987) identify mentoring and coaching and administrative supports as the social support components.

I have the same opinion as the participating teachers regarding collaboration and collegiality. Through my own experiences with professional development and formal courses, I have gained knowledge and understanding by interacting with others in a learning situation. When colleagues are able to verbalize a story or classroom experience that relates to the newly presented information, I am able to make connections that I otherwise may not have made. Online courses, though sometimes offering the elements of discussion boards or chat rooms, do not accomplish the same connections for me, as I realize in face-to-face encounters. Sharing a learning experience sometimes offers the social dimension that allows learners to immediately apply information and thus increase or facilitate understanding. For example, I participate in Power Teaching (2008), which is a mathematics initiative through the Success for All Foundation. The trainings offer instruction in a curricular framework designed around a research-proven Cycle of Effective Instruction that engages students to extend their mathematical understanding. Workshops are presented in much the same way that the framework is delivered to the students, through cooperative learning strategies and techniques. Through working with peers in this type of setting, I have gained a greater depth of understanding.

The previous research is supported by this dissertation. The results from the survey used in this study concur with the pilot study and literature review, in that, teachers' responses to the survey indicate that learning in groups is a facilitator to learning. There is also strong evidence that females learn better than males through collaborative efforts. However, teachers with a range of

82

21 – 25 years of working in the present school or current building have lower rates of agreement to learning though collaborative means. By removing the current building stipulation, this range of years does not show the same effect.

Strong facilitators to participating in learning activities are as follows:
- Collegiality;
- Attending conferences;
- Strong information seeking skills;
- Enjoyment and change of pace;
- Easy access to learning opportunities;
- Encouragement from family members;
- Encouragement from other teachers; and
- Application to classroom and student achievement.

Of course, several of these facilitators can exist for one individual. It is also important to note that some facilitators are internal while others are external. For example, collegiality, information seeking skills, and enjoyment are internal or intrinsic facilitators, while easy access to learning and encouragement from others can be considered external. Attending conferences may be dependent on district approval, and therefore may be an external facilitator. Application to classroom and student achievement is dependent on whether the participant is offered a choice of professional development opportunities to meet ones need. Therefore, facilitators can be reasons existing within an individual or orientations that occur outside of the person.

The literature is clear on the sense that the thing that most strongly motivates teachers to engage in teaching and in the improvement of their practice is evidence of student learning. As discussed previously in the Literature Review, Snow-Renner & Lauer (2005) state that student achievement is positively correlated with the extent of teacher participation in quality professional development. When educators perceive that a new skill is related to student achievement, they are more likely to embrace the skill (NASDSE, 2007).

As lead instructor in a public school setting, I observe teachers' reactions to student achievement. I confer with teachers regarding attainment of proficiency levels on benchmark assessments and progress reports for students. I can sense an element of pride from teachers when their students are making gains. Teachers readily share stories of situations that assist particular students. It is easy to see that teachers share a sense of pride and claim some ownership for their students' accomplishments.

There are strong indicators of other relationships regarding facilitators of learning. For example, location is perceived as more of a facilitator to females than to males, and females view learning opportunities as a better match to their learning styles. In addition, beginning teachers have higher aspirations for career advancement with potential for financial reward through learning opportunities than do teachers with more than ten years of experience.

Barriers

Cross (1981) identifies three types of perceived barriers to learning:

1) Situational barriers: those arising from one's situation at a given time.

- lack of money - the cost of studying, the cost of child care and so on
- lack of time, for example, because of job and home responsibilities
- lack of transport to study venue

2) Institutional barriers: those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage adults form participating in activities.

- inconvenient schedules or locations for programs
- lack of relevant or appropriate programs
- the emphasis on full-time study in many institutions

3) Dispositional barriers: those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner.

- feeling 'too old' to learn
- lack of confidence because of 'poor' previous educational achievements
- tired of school, tired of classrooms

This study corresponds to Cross' findings. Several common barriers to participating in learning activities are found in this dissertation:

- Time;
- Financial obligations;
- Family obligations; and
- Lack of choice in professional development activities.

Although time is found to be a barrier overall, there are several indicators that particular groups are influenced more by this barrier. More females than males express that time is a barrier to learning, and teachers with a range of 11 – 15 years of service report higher constraints due to time barriers.

Financial obligations most severely impact teachers with a range of 6 – 10 years of teaching experience, but teachers with a range of 1 – 5 years also express strong financial concerns. When examining financial obligations compared to levels of education, teachers with less than a Master's Degree communicate elevated apprehensions. And finally, more males articulate that financial responsibilities are a barrier to learning.

Family obligations are found to be barriers to participating in professional development opportunities. Family responsibilities largely impact all experience levels with added emphasis on those with 6 – 15 years of teaching experience. A relationship is also found between family obligations and levels of education. For example, teachers with a Bachelor's Degree plus 15 credits, a Bachelor's Degree plus 30 credits, and a Master's Degree have higher survey ratings regarding this barrier. Family liabilities do not have a relationship to gender in the survey multiple-choice questions, although open-ended responses indicate that family obligations are largely female concerns. *It is possible that the two cross-tabulation findings indicate that parents in child rearing years are most impacted by family obligations and financial obligation.*

In my own experience, I found family and financial obligations to be difficult barriers to overcome. I was a single parent of two children for many years. I often worked two and three jobs to maintain the type of lifestyle that I wanted my children to experience. There were added

babysitting fees when I left my children to go to a job or a class, so I often chose the activity that earned the money that we needed. The additional working hours left little time to experience learning opportunities. I returned to formal coursework in the universities when my children were in college and in high school. Although I still struggled to attend most of the activities of two very involved teenagers, I was able to find learning time for me when the children became more independent.

Teachers show concerns about not being offered choices in professional development activities. With 70% responding positively to the statement that professional development topics are decided for them, this issue is one of importance. Many indicate being forced to attend sessions that are not applicable to their content or grade level. Many are refused opportunities to seek out alternative choices. *Is there a relationship concerning teachers' discontent of programming to the behaviors that teachers often exhibit at in-service programs, coming with papers to check, newspapers to read, or puzzle books to complete?*

Another relationship found is that job constraints are more of a barrier for males than females. Of the 23 males that agree or strongly agree that this is a barrier, all of them have a Master's Degree or higher. This correlation may signify that males with a higher level of education have a position with more responsibility. However, a further analysis comparing males with Master's Degrees or higher to grade level or departments taught does not show a relationship.

Of the barriers mentioned, financial obligations, family responsibilities, and time (which in some cases may be related to family responsibilities), are obstacles that can change, and as circumstances are altered, the barriers may not always be a problem. Lack of choice in professional development activities is a barrier that is external.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Education

The findings within this study have strong value to the educational community. With federal and state mandates requiring professional development, local education associations must provide numerous hours of trainings for educational faculty members. No Child Left Behind (2001) calls

for sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused professional development that is scientifically based, yet there is still confusion around the issue and little consistency in implementation. According to the results of the survey, teachers overwhelmingly possess the desire to learn. In order for the learning activities to have worth to the professional staff, professional development activities must be provided in ways that give teachers meaningful content with easy access. The findings are important to society, as teachers with extended knowledge of content, learning strategies, differentiation, and best practices based on research and evidence will provide high-quality instruction to students. School districts and other organizations that provide professional development opportunities should strive to eliminate or lesson barriers that obstruct learning for teachers.

With information learned in this study, school districts and other professional organizations that provide professional development for educators have information from teachers about what is meaningful for participating in learning situations. First and foremost, educators want to learn more about their profession. Many want to be trained more than they are given opportunities, as barriers sometimes prevent their participation. If barriers can be overcome or lessened, then teachers may experience more learning opportunities, and thus may provide better instruction for their students. The study names particular barriers that are most overwhelming for teachers, namely time, financial obligations, family responsibilities, and lack of choice for application of learning to meet the needs of the content area or grade level taught. If these considerations are accounted for in planning professional development opportunities, then learning occasions will become much closer to that which is dedicated to the endurance of the love of learning and the useful.

The study has also identified facilitators to participation in learning activities. Teachers, like most individuals, respond to encouragement; they specifically name family and other professionals as important support systems. Easy access, strong information seeking skills, enjoyment, and conferences are identified as facilitators. Collegiality is another strong facilitator of learning. These facilitators are important and need to be continued and capitalized.

Natural steps to follow this study are numerous. For this study to be useful, it must serve as a catalyst for further conversations about quality professional development. Attention must be given to the needs of the professionals, such as time, financial support, and choices in topics that are applicable to specific professional positions. These conversations will require an open sharing of ideas and ideals that will take into consideration the perceptions of teachers as important.

It needs to be acknowledged, that we are doing many good, correct, and right things with professional development. For example, as professionals, we encourage one another by sharing information and by supporting one another. Professionals have information seeking skills and set goals for learning. Educational organizations provide some time and financial support for trainings. *Isn't it great to know that it is not enough, and that teachers want to continue to learn even more than is expected? I am reminded of the teachers in my school who have worked together throughout the year to align mathematics and science textbooks and resources to the state standards. I recall conversations where teachers described their work in eliminating pages from textbooks that do not align to the standards as, "fun." These teachers have strong information seeking skills in locating outside resources that supplement the adopted curriculum, where needed.*

We must be doing some things right; at the beginning of my teaching career, approximately 25 years ago, kindergarten students were learning the alphabet after one year. Now kindergarten children are reading fifteen or more books before they enter first grade. We are incorporating brain studies into instructional strategies. We know about social and cultural dimensions and the impact they have on learning. We are exploring social and emotional intelligence, learning styles, and best practices in instruction. Changes are evident in the classrooms as a result of quality teacher training and professional development.

Research has shown educator quality to be the most important influence upon student achievement. High quality professional development is essential to increase educators' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs so that they may enable all students to learn at high

levels. Professional development that is most effective in improving educator practice is results-oriented, data driven, and job embedded.

Educators have a responsibility to encourage and nurture their own love of learning, and educational organizations have the responsibility to create conditions and provide tools and procedures for helping teachers experience learning situations. Educational organizations need to see professional development as a process of developing increased competence in teachers, which ultimately will impact instruction for their students. Also, providers of professional development trainings should strive to incorporate strategies to keep learners actively engaged.

Learners

There are several points that require further discussion. Educators need to take an active role in facilitating their own learning. It is sometimes easiest to participate in a learning activity where a presenter does all the work. Yet, as educators, we know this is the least effective way to retain information. If this is the type of setting that is forced upon an educator, there are tools that can be employed for increasing learning, strategies to keep the learner engaged. One example would be two-column note taking, or noting a quote or phrase from the speaker in the left column and writing a response or an application to the phrase in the right column.

Teachers need to actively participate in their learning by making decisions about learning based on their own needs and then formulating plans to reach the goals that they set. Reflecting on previous or new knowledge or even daily experiences in the classrooms is a tool that involves the meaning-making process and can aid in our own learning. This can be done individually or in a group setting. Many of the sample's participants express that learning collaboratively aids with scholarship. By sharing information with peers, teachers have the ability to strongly impact their learning. If one teacher shares new knowledge with another teacher, the knowledge is doubled. Imagine what can be learned if grade level teachers or departments regularly collaborate. Collaboration across grades and departments allows teachers to develop a better understanding of where students have been, where they are headed, and how to reinforce themes and skills across content areas.

Educational Organizations

In the same way, an organization benefits by providing time for teachers to share or collaborate, providing a setting for increasing knowledge. This knowledge does not necessarily have to come from formal professional development presentations, but the knowledge can result from daily experience, journal reading, studying student work, and the like.

The learning organization can provide learning opportunities that are not obstructed by time, financial obligations, or family obligations. By providing learning opportunities within the school calendar, teachers will not have the burden of these barriers to overcome. There are many methods of providing training during the school day. Some districts have daily collaboration periods built into the regularly scheduled school day. Further, in-service days are generally built into the school calendar. School districts may also apply for Act 80 days, by providing the state with proof of a particular number of instructional hours. Act 80 days are counted as instructional days, but the students are not in attendance. Another method would be to provide substitutes for teacher training, allowing regular teachers to attend a full day or a portion of the day in a learning experience while substitute teachers instruct the classroom.

Presenters

Presenters may also increase the effectiveness of the delivery of professional development by assisting the participants in being active learners. For example, admit slips or activities used at the beginning of a learning experience create engagement through motivation, attention, and stimulation of thinking about the topic. An example of an admit slip would be asking learners to complete an analogy, like "Professional development is like <u>what kind of music</u> because _____." A response might be, "Professional development is like symphonic music because if it is orchestrated correctly, the audience leaves with a feeling of refreshment." Another way to use analogies as an admit slip is to list two columns of words, one related to the topic of professional development and the other to the culture of the audience. The presenter then asks the participants to write analogies by finding a relationship between the first column and the second. An example follows.

Student	engagement	Pittsbu	rgh Steelers
Liter	acy strategies	Fl	avors of Rita's ice cream
Cooperative	Learning	Heinz	Hall

A sample response (from the Pittsburgh area) may be, Cooperative learning is like the Pittsburgh Steelers because everyone on the team needs to work together to get to the goal.

Similar activities to promote active engagement can be used during a presentation. The purpose is to keep learners actively engaged. Depending on the setting and size of the participatory audience, a presenter can use strategies, such as Think-Pair-Share, a cooperative learning strategy that allows the learner to think about a topic, share with a partner or small group, and then report to the entire group. Other strategies can require more movement, such as Jigsaw, Inner Circle and Outer Circle, Gallery Walks, and so forth. Numerous strategies for active engagement can be found through Internet sites or books.

And finally, a presenter can engage learners up to the conclusion of a presentation by using exit slips as a closing. For example, one exit slip is called 2 Wows and a Scowl, which asks the learner to list two things learned in the presentation and one thing that requires further discovery.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The present study delivered limited information about professional development participation from a teacher perspective. There is a need for additional research regarding the reasons for participating in professional development. There is a lack of conclusion in the field to demonstrate the complexity of providing professional development for teachers. A larger or similar sample may further validate the findings. Future analysis may be needed to determine if geographical conditions have an impact on teachers' perceptions. For example, four geographical areas are part of the sample for this study, but to keep participants confidential, it is unknown even to the researcher, which responses come from which areas. Further, in less developed countries, different results may be found. More background information on participants may yield deeper information, such as the educational background of parents. Future studies may address other populations. Race and immigrant populations are factors that need assessed. In

91

addition, as previously mentioned, educators from other types of educational settings, like private schools, cyber schools, or alternative schools, may submit different perspectives.

Future studies may concentrate on three themes that emerged in this study:

- Alternative ways to deliver professional development;
- Gender differences in learning styles; and
- Appropriate professional development based on the needs of the learners.

Further research may consider the following questions as related to the three themes.

1. Alternative ways to deliver professional development:

- To address matters of choice, time, financial and familial obligations, what types of alternative curricula are possible?
- What kind of media is best for promoting or delivering opportunities for learning?
- What are the most appropriate ways to deliver professional development within the established school calendar?
- Can teachers be organized into learning-communities whose goals reflect that of the needs of the school?
- What kinds of partnerships can provide expertise and resources to support professional development?

2. Gender differences in learning styles:

- Why is location more of a barrier for males than for females?
- Are single parents the respondents that report more serious family obligations? How do we accommodate these teachers?
- What learning styles are best for males?
- How do the more social learning styles of females relate to social norms and expectations?

3. Appropriate professional development based on the needs of the learners:

- In what ways can the needs of the professionals be assessed?

- What are the most appropriate ways to offer choices in professional development?
- Can the professional development needs of a school district be met while still honoring the learning needs of individuals?

There is a specific study that found similar interesting results; in the book *Adults as Learners* (Cross, 1981), Cross worked out ways of grouping specific barriers into categories: Situational, depending on a person's situation at a given time; Institutional, all practices and procedures that discourage adults from participation, such as filling out forms; and Dispositional, person's attitude about self and learning. Cross looks at participation from a psychological perspective. One may look at the teachers' perspectives from a different structure and discover different explanations as to why adults are participating or not participating in learning activities. For example, the social structure, the learning institutional structure, the structure of the trainings, and the like can be considered in further research.

I have had the pleasure of knowing teachers that are blessed with a gift. I have sometimes labeled these special few as 'born to teach.' They are the teachers that seem to naturally instruct students to levels of understanding; they have ideal classroom management skills; and they become many students' favorite teachers. Not all of us in the profession are that fortunate. Many teachers, like me, work diligently at these critical tasks in the classrooms. We rely on quality professional development to assist us in becoming the teachers that we aspire to be. We deserve to have the opportunities to continue to learn and to develop into the inspiring roles that will impact the future.

Educational professionals will continue to learn and refresh their current knowledge base through their daily experiences, mandated trainings, and other requirements of the field. It is in the best interest of educational providers and society at large to provide professional development opportunities that are worthwhile to application in the classrooms and to instruction, and to make access to learning easy.

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95

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Appendixes

Appendix A

<div align="center">

Confirmation Letter to Superintendents

WestVirginiaUniversity

College of Human Resources and Education
Department of Curriculum & Instruction/Literacy Studies

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District Information

Dear Superintendent,

You have demonstrated your commitment to the value of research in the area of education and professional development by considering district participation in a survey about professional development and continual learning. Your cooperative spirit will assist me in collecting valuable teachers' perspectives regarding the values placed on professional development and the facilitators and barriers to their constant learning.

I am including a copy of the survey for your review, as you requested. If you agree that your teachers may participate in the study, the following will apply.

You or a designee will be sent the initial email, which will then be forward to all teachers within the district. The survey will be sent to all teachers within the school district via email by embedding a URL (Internet link) within the email message for access to the survey. Participation is voluntary, and individual and professional information will be kept strictly confidential. The participants and the participating districts will not be identified in any way. The teachers do not have to respond to every question, and they may choose to end the survey at any time. No students will be involved.

You will also identify one teacher that you consider to be a lifelong learner. That teacher will be interviewed to help me gain a deeper understanding of critical incidents that led to continual professional learning. I will contact the teacher to schedule the interview.

The information collected will be used to evaluate teachers' perspectives on the values and practices of professional learning. The survey will also assist in identifying facilitators and barriers to teachers' performance of continuous learning. The results will be used to make recommendations for quality professional development opportunities that will enhance the value of continual learning. The long-term goal is that students will benefit tremendously from the expansive knowledge base and the vast array of professional experiences that well-trained, motivated teachers will bring to the classrooms.

Your willingness to participate is deeply appreciated. If you wish to speak with me or have additional questions about the survey or interview, please contact me at moorejlh@lhsd.org or 724-437-9600 during the school day.

Educationally Yours,
Jeanne Moore

Appendix B

<p align="center">**Survey Invitation**</p>

<p align="center">**WestVirginiaUniversity**</p>

<p align="center">College of Human Resources and Education
Department of Curriculum & Instruction/Literacy Studies</p>

Dear Participant,

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project to assess teachers' perceptions regarding professional development. My name is Jeanne Moore, a doctoral student at West Virginia University in the program of Curriculum and Instruction, and I am conducting this project. I am currently conducting research for partial fulfillment of the requirements for my dissertation research in Curriculum & Instruction at West Virginia University, with supervision of Dr. Patricia Obenauf, a professor in the College of Human Resources and Education. Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated and will take approximately 10 minutes of your time to participate in a survey. You will have the option of continuing or opting out of the survey at any time.

Your involvement in this project will be kept as confidential as legally possible. All data will be reported in the aggregate. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. I will not ask any information that should lead back to your identity as a participant. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer and you may discontinue at any time. Your job status will not be affected by your refusal to participate or to withdraw from the study. West Virginia's University's Institutional Review Board acknowledgement of this project is on file.

As an incentive to participate, you will be given an opportunity to win a $50 gift card for Staples. If you are interested in a chance to win the gift card, you are asked to email me your first name and first initial of your last name. This information will not be included in the results of the survey and will not be connected to your completed survey; it will only be used for purposes of awarding the incentive. If you would like to be entered in the drawing for the $50 Staples gift card, email your first name and first initial of your last name to the following email address: moorejlh@lhsd.org.

I hope that you will participate in this research project, as it could be beneficial in understanding valuable teachers' perspectives regarding professional development. Thank you very much for your time. Should you have any questions about this letter or the research project, please feel free to contact Jeanne Moore at (724) 437- 2150 or by e-mail at moorejlh@lhsd.org.

To access the survey, please go to the following Internet link:
http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228RUUBHWSQ

Thank you for your time and help with this project.
Sincerely,

Jeanne Moore

Appendix C

Survey Introduction

The beginning of the survey will include the following introduction:

You are invited to participate in a survey, which will require about ten minutes of your time. The survey will be used to collect data for a study for partial fulfillment of the requirements for dissertation research in Curriculum & Instruction at West Virginia University. The study will assess teachers' perceptions regarding professional development. The teachers in your district have been selected to participate in the study. Your perspectives, therefore, are thought to be valuable to the study, as you have worthwhile experiences to report.

Your responses will be kept anonymous or confidential; at no time will your name be revealed during reporting. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can stop the survey at any time, and you do not have to respond to every item or question. Your job status will not be affected by your refusal to participate or to withdraw from the study.

Your responses will be combined with the replies from teachers of several other participating districts. You will not be identified in any way. Your responses will be used to assist me as the researcher in gathering and categorizing teacher perspectives relative to professional development. Thank you for your participation in this research study.

Appendix D

Survey Questions

The following questions will have drop down boxes:

1. I am:
   - o   Male
   - o   Female

2. What is your highest level of education?
   - o   Bachelor's Degree
   - o   Bachelor's Degree plus 15 credits
   - o   Bachelor's Degree plus 24 credits
   - o   Master's Degree
   - o   Master's Degree plus 15 credits
   - o   Master's Degree plus 30 credits
   - o   Doctoral Degree

3. How many years have you been teaching?
   - o   1 – 5
   - o   6 – 10
   - o   11- 15
   - o   16 – 20
   - o   21 – 25
   - o   26 or more

4. How many years have you taught in the present school or current building?
   - o   1 – 5
   - o   6 – 10
   - o   11- 15
   - o   16 – 20

o 21 – 25

o 26 or more

5. In what grade level or departments do you teach? (Multiple Answer format)

o Grades Kindergarten through 2

o Grades 3 – 5

o Grades 6 – 8

o Grades 9 – 12

o Math

o Business

o Science

o History/Social Studies

o Language Arts

o Fine Arts

o Foreign Language

o Physical Education

o Other

The following questions will be based on a 5=point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree).

	5- Strongly Agree	4 - Agree	3-Neutral	2 -Disagree	1 - Strongly Disagree
1. I consider myself a continuous learner within the field of teaching.					
2. I have a personal desire to learn more about teaching.					
3. I only participate in professional development opportunities because they are a requirement to maintain professional certification.					
4. I typically earn more professional development hours than are needed for maintaining certification.					
5. Learning provides relaxation and enjoyment as a change of pace from the routine.					
6. I find access to learning opportunities easily.					

7. I have a lack of computer access.

8. Job constraints keep me from participating in more learning opportunities.

9. I am able to identify goals in my pursuit of learning.

10. The distance for participating in learning opportunities is convenient.

11. The location of learning opportunities is convenient.

Drop down box:

12. I would describe my learning style in the following way:

- o I need dominated by strong leadership that gives rewards.
- o I work best when told how to do things the right way
- o I am motivated by the achievement of material rewards
- o I want to get along and feel accepted by peers; sharing and participating are better than competing.
- o I enjoy doing things that fit who I am; I need free access to information and materials.
- o My work must be meaningful to the overall health of life.

Drop down box:

13. On average, what percentage of your school day do you spend on psychological or social problems?

- o Less than 25%
- o 26 – 50%
- o 51 – 75%
- o More than 75%

14. The outside demands of the classroom (such as correcting papers) keep me from participating in more learning opportunities.

15. Making time for participating in learning opportunities is easy.

16. Learning opportunities offer me increased opportunity for career advancement with potential for financial reward.

17. I am encouraged by family members to continue to learn.

18. I am successful in achieving my professional learning goals.

19. Family obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.

20. Financial obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.

21. Learning opportunities offer me increased recognition from and ability to serve the community.

22. Learning opportunities often match my learning style.

23. Learning opportunities are affordable.

24. Learning opportunities give me the chance to meet/ network/ exchange ideas with others in my profession.

25. The school where I teach has a high level of free and reduced lunch rates.

26. Continuation of learning is a low personal priority for me.

27. I receive encouragement from my employer to participate in learning opportunities.

28. There is little opportunity for career advancement as a result of participating in learning activities.

29. I have had negative experiences with prior learning activities.

30. I have strong information seeking skills.

31. I am a self-initiator.

32. My overall well-being limits me from participating in learning opportunities.

33. I enjoy reading professional journals.

34. I have gained professional skills through participating in a conference within the last five years.

35. I feel that professional development topics are decided for me.

36. I regularly collaborate with other teachers.

37. I participate in learning opportunities to promote student achievement.

38. I have participated in a research project or pilot program within the last five years.

39. Working routinely in groups or teams provides me with experiences that are based on the reality of my daily teaching practice.

40. I am burnt out from participating in professional development.

41. Other people influence my learning.

42. I have increased my learning as a result of working in a group.

43. I have choices about professional development opportunities.

Comment boxes:

I would like to be participate in more professional development opportunities, however my major

obstacle is the following:

I participate in many professional development opportunities, and I believe my major influence has been the following:

Appendix E

<p align="center">**Survey Closing**</p>

Thank you for participating in this research study. Your additional comments regarding the topic of professional development are welcome. Please add additional comments below.

Appendix F

<div align="center">

Interview Invitation

W WestVirginiaUniversity

College of Human Resources and Education
Department of Curriculum & Instruction/Literacy Studies

</div>

Dear Participant,

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project to assess teachers' perceptions regarding professional development. My name is Jeanne Moore, a doctoral student at West Virginia University in the program of Curriculum and Instruction, and I am conducting this project. I am currently conducting research for partial fulfillment of the requirements for my dissertation research in Curriculum & Instruction at West Virginia University, with supervision of Dr. Patricia Obenauf, a professor in the College of Human Resources and Education. Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated and will take approximately 20 minutes participate in an interview.

Your involvement in this project will be kept as confidential as legally possible. All data will be reported in the aggregate. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. I will not ask any information that should lead back to your identity as a participant. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer and you may discontinue at any time. Your job status will not be affected by your refusal to participate or to withdraw from the study. West Virginia's University's Institutional Review Board acknowledgement of this project is on file.

I hope that you will participate in this research project, as it could be beneficial in understanding valuable teachers' perspectives regarding professional development. Thank you very much for your time. Should you have any questions about this letter or the research project, please feel free to contact Jeanne Moore at (724) 437- 2150 or by e-mail at moorejlh@lhsd.org.

Thank you for your time and help with this project.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Moore

Appendix G

Interview Introduction

Good morning, thank you for participating in this research study. The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions of teachers regarding professional development. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my dissertation research in Curriculum & Instruction at West Virginia University. I would like to audiotape this interview in order to accurately represent what you say; may I have your permission to tape this interview?

Before we begin I want to make sure you understand the following:

Your responses will be kept anonymous or confidential; at no time will your name be revealed during reporting.

Your name will not be attached to either the tape or notes from this interview, or to transcribed data.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, you can choose to stop the interview at any time, and you do not have to answer every question.

Your job status will not be affected by your refusal to participate or to withdraw from the study. Do you understand? Do you have any questions?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Appendix H

Interview Questions

1) What is your role in education?

2) Your superiors consider you a continuous or ongoing learner in the field of education. What activities have you participated in that would make them think of you in this way?

3) When did you begin to realize that you were a constant learner in the field of education? Prompt with critical incident, time, place, person.

4) What are some critical incidents that you think have influenced you to continue to learn about your profession?

    a. What are some examples of events or people that have encouraged you to continue to learn? Prompts: Personal or professional

    b. What motivates you to continue to study a topic?

5) How do you approach barriers that you encounter that may prevent you from participating in a learning opportunity?

    a. Prompt with after school roles, climate in the school, demands of the classroom, and others if needed.

6) What topics are you most passionate about in professional development?

    a. Connection to education overall; or

    b. Application to the classroom

7) What is the main purpose for your participation in learning activities?

    a. What types of learning activities or courses have you taken just because you wanted to strengthen yourself in a particular area?

    b. How do you assess your strengths and weaknesses to make a plan to address your learning needs?

8) What else would you like to add to your expert comments on professional learning?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and this research study.

Attributes of a Continuous Learner

Question Number	Attributes of Continuous Learner:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
				Percentages:		
6	I consider myself a continuous learner within the field of teaching.	3	0	0	36	61
7	I have a personal desire to learn more about teaching.	2	0	3	38	56
9	I typically earn more professional development hours than are needed for maintaining certification.	2	3	13	39	43
14	I am able to identify goals in my pursuit of learning.	0	1	10	65	25
23	I am successful in achieving my lifelong learning goals.	0	3	14	61	21
36	I am a self-initiator.	0	2	13	58	27
38	I enjoy reading professional journals.	5	19	27	40	9
39	I have gained professional skills through participation in a conference within the last five years.	5	8	5	48	33
43	I have participated in a research project or pilot study within the last five years.	18	35	6	26	15

Question Number		Need Leadership	Need told	Material Rewards	Sharing	Fit who I am Free	Meaningful to
17	I would describe my learning style in the following way:	0	14	3	27	43	13

Interview Questions:

2	Your superiors consider you a continuous or ongoing learner in the field of education. What activities have you participated in that would make them think of you in this way?

3	When did you begin to realize that you were a constant learner in the field of education?
6	What topics are you most passionate about in professional development?
7	What is the main purpose for your participation in learning activities? • What types of learning activities or courses have you taken just because you wanted to strengthen yourself in a particular area? • How do you assess your strengths and weaknesses to make a plan to address your learning needs?

Facilitators

	Facilitators:	Percentages				
Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	Learning provides relaxation and enjoyment as a change of pace from the routine.	2	4	21	54	20
11	I find access to learning opportunities easily.	1	10	21	55	14
15	The distance for participating in learning opportunities is convenient.	3	13	30	47	7
16	The location of learning opportunities is convenient.	3	15	25	50	7
20	Making time for participating in learning opportunities is easy.	12	47	24	15	2
21	Learning opportunities offer me increased opportunity for career advancement with potential for financial reward.	15	29	7	35	5
22	I am encouraged by family members to continue to learn.	6	7	23	42	23
26	Learning opportunities offer me increased recognition from and ability to serve the community.	8	19	5	32	6
27	Learning opportunities often match my learning style.	3	17	33	44	3
28	Learning opportunities are affordable.	12	29	34	23	2
29	Learning opportunities give me the chance to meet/ network/ exchange ideas with others in my profession.	0	2	12	62	24
30	The school where I teach has a high level of free and reduced lunch rates.	35	28	19	12	6

32	I receive encouragement from my employer to participate in learning opportunities.	4	14	26	45	11
35	I have strong information seeking skills.	1	2	20	59	18
39	I have gained professional skills through participation in a conference within the last five years.	5	8	5	48	33
48	I have choices about professional development opportunities.	9	18	31	38	5

Interview Questions:

4   What are some critical incidents that you think have influenced you to continue to learn about your profession?

- What are some examples of events or people that have encouraged you to continue to learn?
- What motivates you to continue to study a topic?

Negative Attributes of Continuous Learner

Negative Attributes of Continuous Learner:		Percentages:				

Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8	I only participate in professional development opportunities because they are a requirement to maintain professional certification.	27	43	19	9	2

Question Number		Need Leadership	Need told	Material Rewards	Sharing	Fit who I am	Free access Meaningful	to life
17	I would describe my learning style in the following way:	0	14	3	27	43		13
31	Continuation of learning is a low personal priority for me.	38	48		8	3		3
45	I am burnt out from participating in professional development.	15	49		26	8		3

Barriers

Barriors: Percentages

Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12	I have a lack of computer access.	61	30	4	2	2
13	Job constraints keep me from participating in more learning opportunities.	5	28	25	35	7
19	The outside demands of the classroom (such as correcting papers) keep me from participating in more learning opportunities.	4	23	14	38	20
24	Family obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.	6	21	18	35	20
25	Financial obligations make it difficult to participate in learning opportunities.	4	16	19	35	26
33	There is little opportunity for career advancement as a result of participating in learning activities.	5	24	21	43	7
34	I have had negative experiences with prior learning activities.	15	42	21	19	4
37	My overall well-being limits me from participating in learning opportunities.	28	52	14	5	1

Question Number		Less than 25%	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	More than 75%
18	On average, what percentage of the school day do you spend on psychological or social problems?	63	23	8	6

Interview Questions:

5   How do you approach barriers that you encounter that may prevent you from

participating in a learning opportunity?

Characteristics of Professional Development

Question Number		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
40	I feel that professional development topics are decided for me.	1	8	21	47	23
41	I regularly collaborate with other teachers.	2	8	9	45	35
42	I participate in learning opportunities to promote student achievement.	0	2	12	55	32
44	Working routinely in groups or teams provides me with experiences that are based on the reality of my daily teaching practice.	5	12	17	50	16
46	Other people influence my learning.	2	18	24	51	5
47	I have increased my learning as a result of working in a group.	2	9	21	54	14

Vitae

Jeanne Moore

P.O. Box 30   Phone 724-437-2150

76 Lafayette Trail   Work 724-437-9600

Chalk Hill, PA 15421

moorejlh@lhsd.org

Summary of Qualifications

I am a dedicated educator and child advocate who has been working in the field of education for 27 years. Currently holding the positions of elementary principal and Professor at two state universities. I have also served in the roles of teacher in grades 1, 2, and 3, Learning Support, and Gifted Education.

Education

Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV
Expected date of Graduation: May, 2009
G.P.A. 4.0

Curriculum and Instruction Supervision
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA
December, 2005
G.P.A. 4.0

Master of Education
California University of Pennsylvania
California, PA
August, 1984
G.P.A.: 4.0; Reading Specialist

Elementary Principal Certification
California University of Pennsylvania
California, PA
August, 1997
G.P.A.: 4.0; Elementary and Middle School Certification

Elementary Certification
California University of Pennsylvania
California, PA
June, 1985
G.P.A.: 4.0

Bachelor of Science
California University of Pennsylvania
California, PA
December, 1982
G.P.A.: 3.85; Mentally and/or Physically Handicapped

Associate of Science
California University of Pennsylvania
California, PA
December, 1982
Mentally and/or Physically Handicapped

Professional Experiences

Professor of Literacy Studies
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV

Professor of Education
Penn State University
Fayette Eberly Campus
Uniontown, PA

Elementary Principal
R.W. Clark Elementary
Laurel Highlands School District
Uniontown, PA

Elementary Principal
John F Kennedy Elementary
Laurel Highlands School District
Uniontown, PA

Elementary Principal Summer School Program
Pre K – 6
Laurel Highlands School District
Uniontown, PA

Teacher of Gifted Education, K - 8
Laurel Highlands School District
Uniontown, PA

Teacher of grades 1, 2, and 3
Laurel Highlands School District
Uniontown, PA

Teacher of Learning Support, K - 6
Laurel Highlands School District
Uniontown, PA

Coordinator of Kids in College
Penn State University
Fayette Campus
Uniontown, PA

Courses Taught

RDNG 622
Content Area Literacy Instruction
West Virginia University

RDNG 422
Reading in the Content Area
West Virginia University

ED THP 115
Education in an American Society
Penn State University

C & I 295
Curriculum and Instruction
Penn State University

Scholarship

Golden Key International Honour Society
West Virginia University Chapter

Professional Presentations

Power Teaching
Fall Regional Teacher Title I Workshop
October, 2008

Brain Research and Differentiated Instruction
In-service Presentation
Four sessions to all Laurel Highlands School District teachers
August, 2008
Uniontown, PA

Success Stories Panel Discussion
Brain Summit
April, 2008
Niagara Fall, NY

How the Young Brain Learns
Improving Schools Conference
January, 2008
Pittsburgh, PA

The Windy Road to Data Driven Student Outcomes
Workshop Presentation
December, 2007
Indian Creek School District
Steubenville, Ohio

Understanding the Writing Process
In-service Workshop
August, 2007
Laurel Highlands School District

The Media Portrayal of the Teacher
In-service Presentation
August, 2007
Laurel Highlands School District

How the Young Brain Learns
Workshop: Supper Club
February, 2007
Laurel Highlands School District

Differentiated Instruction
Series of Five Workshops
March, 2007
Laurel Highlands School District

Technology Skills & Other Recent Trainings

Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit data system, PA Value Added, Blackboard, Podcasting, WebQuests, Web Design, Thinkfinity, Angel, Ecampus, LETRS, Reading Apprentice, Power Teaching, Data Institute, Principals' Leadership Academy

Professional Memberships

Golden Key International Honor Society
West Virginia University Chapter

National Association of Elementary Schools

Pennsylvania Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development
Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development

Community Activities

Pennsylvania Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development Foundation, Co-chair: 2005 - 2007

Pennsylvania Arts Presenters, 2005 to present
Laurel Highlands Arts Series, 2005 to present